

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 21 – NO. 19

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1.50

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 30, 2023

New Wishes for Funerals Create Niche for Crafts

By CHARLOTTE MURTISHAW

TURNERS FALLS – “I walked into a basketmaker’s shop and she was working on a coffin, and I was like, ‘Oh. I have to do that.’ And that’s where it all started,” said Mary Lauren Fraser, surrounded by willow reeds, woven caskets, urns, and baskets in her downtown Turners Falls studio. “I just felt it in my body.”

Since her chance encounter-turned-apprenticeship with that

basketmaker in the United Kingdom, Fraser has developed a full-time business in the craft – in North America, she is one of only a handful of coffin-weaving specialists, though they are widespread overseas. But while that was nearly ten years ago, she notes that demand for her wares has increased dramatically over the past two or three years, in step with increased attention to alternative burial practices.

There are many advantages to see **CRAFT** page A3



NINA ROSSI PHOTO

Mary Fraser weaves a willow coffin in her downtown Turners Falls studio.

Local Death Care Workers Warn: Build Capacity Now

By NATAN COHEN

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Everybody dies. Many people even encounter death on a regular basis. But how many of us truly prepare ourselves and our loved ones for the inevitable? Emily Eliot “EE” Miller, a death educator and doula based in Greenfield, calls this “practicing being a mortal.”

Miller is part of a new wave of death care practitioners who – according to the Association for Death Education, where she trained in Thanatology – “[e]nvision a world in which dying, death, and

bereavement are recognized as fundamental and significant aspects of the human experience.”

“I work with individuals and groups at all stages of life and health,” Miller told the *Reporter*. “I want to bring us more into a life-cycle consciousness, where death is seen as part of life as opposed to a failure, the problem we can’t fix.”

Like many death care workers, Miller’s services include helping people plan their own process of dying, such as filling out advance directive paperwork, which is used to instruct loved ones and medical see **CARE** page A6

As Media Shifts, Will You Write Your Own Obituary?

By EASTON SMITH

TURNERS FALLS – The obituary page is a mainstay of most large or mid-sized newspapers. It is also one of the only sections that is not written – or in some cases, even edited – by professionals. Nearly all obituaries are written by family and friends of the deceased.

How do people know what to write about their loved ones after they die? What happens when people have different accounts of the dead, and of the lives they lived? How does an obituary get published, and how is the industry changing as media shifts in the digital age?

We set out to answer these questions for our readers.

Many politicians, movie stars, and other prominent people have their lives memorialized long before they die. In the 2016 documentary film *Obit*, one journalist for the *New York Times* says that the paper has over 1,700 “advances” ready to go at any time – that is, obituaries that have been written out long before someone has died and are ready to be published, with some editing, on short notice.

The *Washington Post* claims that it has about 900 of these advance obituaries on file, and that the *Hollywood Reporter* keeps 800 advances for “notable figures in the film and television industry.”

But for most people, an obituary is see **OBITS** page A7

Assisted-Death Bill Returns to Beacon Hill This Session

By SARAH ROBERTSON

BOSTON – Some people suffering with the end stage of a terminal illness have the option to request a medically assisted death, but not in Massachusetts. It is illegal in this state for a doctor to prescribe a patient a combination of drugs that, when ingested, will end their life before they succumb to their disease.

Over the last decade several attempts to give dying people the option to end their lives have failed in the legislature. State senator Jo Comerford introduced the latest such bill – S.1331, “An Act Relative to End of Life Options” – this session after hearing from many constituents.

“It’s not prescribing an end of life, it’s offering a choice,” Comerford told the *Reporter*. “It’s helping people at the end of their life, facing what is arguably one of the most intense realities we can face as humans: a terminal diagnosis with six months to live. It’s giving them the option of see **BILL** page A7

Cafés Spread Cake, Tea – And Support In Mortality

By LEE WICKS

MONTAGUE – At one memorable Death Café meeting at the Gill Montague Senior Center, participants wrote their own obituaries.

“I worried not everyone would get on board,” says Pam Allan, who founded the local Death Café. “As it turned out, it was a funny and moving, and inspiring, meeting.”

At another meeting, Allan says, participants talked about whether they would ever choose to end their own lives as they neared death, “and under what circumstances, and how – it’s not a topic that is out there to talk about in the public square, so it seemed risky. Again, I was moved by each person’s thought process, and ability to be open and kind.”

This trusting exchange about the difficult subject of death is the hallmark of Death Cafés all over the world. The mission, as stated on the Death Café website, could not be more straightforward: “At a Death Café people, often strangers, gather to eat cake, drink tea, and discuss death.”

At Montague’s Death Café, “cake” is loosely interpreted by whoever brings the snack, and coffee is served along with tea, but as the organization originated in London, the emphasis on tea see **CAFÉS** page A6

FirstLight Agrees to Help Purchase Mariamante Lot



NINA ROSSI PHOTO

The empty lot on Main Road in Gill is speculated to be a major historic burial site.

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL – Ahead of a major federal deadline this Friday for wrapping up settlement talks with stakeholders over the terms of its hydroelectric licenses on the Connecticut River, FirstLight Power has signed an understanding “in principle” with local tribal agents and advocates over its approach to traditional cultural resources along the river during the next several decades.

The tentative agreement, released to the public last Friday, is a “good faith” step toward a formal settlement on cultural resources the

company will ask be reflected in its federal license for the next 30 to 50 years. It was signed by chief operating officer Justin Trudell as well as representatives of the Elnu Abenaki tribe, the Chaubunagungamaug Band of Nipmuck Indians, and the Nolumbeka Project, a local Native advocacy organization.

Among its provisions is an agreement that the company, to “remediate the flooding and impoundment” of a centuries-old Native village in present-day Gill now largely underwater due to the Turners Falls hydroelectric dam,

see **AGREES** page A4

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Members to Be Polled On Town Meeting Location

By JEFF SINGLETON

For the second week in a row, the Montague selectboard held an unusually brief meeting, lasting barely over an hour despite the fact that the board introduced the 32-article warrant and motions for the May 6 annual town meeting and spent time discussing the venue.

The board approved collective bargaining agreements with two police unions, formally appointed Annie Levine as the manager of the farmers market, confirmed the process for hiring a new town clerk, and approved submitting an earmark request to the state legis-

lature on behalf of the Montague Center water district.

Only two of the three board members, chair Rich Kuklewicz and Chris Boutwell, were able to attend the meeting, so changes required by the state to a liquor license to be transferred to the Shea Theater – and a public hearing on those changes – were put on hold.

The annual town meeting item began with a discussion of the time, location, and form the meeting would take. Town administrator Steve Ellis stated that “all previous conversations” had affirmed the idea of holding the meeting at the see **MONTAGUE** page A8

GILL SELECTBOARD

Town Hall to Close to Public As Its Asbestos Gets Abated

By KATE SAVAGE

Tuesday’s brief Gill selectboard meeting began with a discussion of town hall remediation following February’s frozen-pipes predicament. Town administrator Ray Purington explained that the building will need to close to public access while asbestos-containing materials on the first floor are removed or encapsulated.

The timeline remains in motion, as Purington is working with one company to determine the feasibility of moving telephone lines upstairs, another company to help pack and move town offices from the first to the second floor, and a third to abate the asbestos.

Once the timing is set, Purington said he would publicize information about locations for meetings

see **GILL** page A5

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Board Nixes Plan to Fine Delinquent Minute-Takers

By KEITH WATERS

At Monday’s selectboard meeting, town clerk Richard Newton submitted a new bylaw request related to the production, and thus availability, of meeting minutes from all town boards and committees. The state open meeting law addresses meeting minutes, but lacks some specificity when it comes to towns as opposed to cities.

The bylaw Newton proposed has nine sections. The first eight make it clear that all boards and committees in Erving must submit their minutes for public availability in a timely manner. Newton said that many other towns have similar bylaws.

The ninth section would have set penalties for non-compliance: if a board or committee is paid, and breaks the open meeting law, they

see **ERVING** page A4



No Gimmicky Theme Issues! Just A Normal Paper

Three Different Letters.....	A2	A Front Row Seat.....	B3
Local Briefs.....	A3	Our Local Headstones.....	B5
Guest Editorial: The Case for Decomposing.....	A4	10, 20, and 150 Years Ago This Week.....	B5
Nature’s Savagery In Full Display.....	B1	Montague Police Log Highlights.....	B6
West Along the River: Epitaphs from Beyond.....	B1	Device/Advice: Leaving The Keys.....	B6
What The Stones Tell Us.....	B1	Reflection: The New Death Trap.....	B7
Communing With The Departed.....	B1	Arts & Entertainment Listing.....	B9
Curated Reading List On The Topic.....	B2	Three Comics and TWO Puzzles.....	B8

The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

Editorial Staff

Mike Jackson, *Managing Editor*
Nina Rossi, *Features Editor*
Chris Sawyer-Lauçanno, *Poetry Page*
Maggie Sadoway, *Editorial Assistant*
Ken Washburn, *Editorial Assistant*
Victoria Maillo, *Spanish Page*
Beverly Ketch, *Children's Page*
Spencer Shorkey, *Science Page*

Production Staff

Garth Shaneyfelt, *Business Manager*
Lyn Clark, *Distribution Manager*
Jae Southerland, *Layout & Subscriptions*
Charlotte Kohlmann, *Layout Assistant*
Christopher Carmody, *Layout Assistant*
Sarah Brown-Anson, *Podcast Producer*

Founded by
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
August 2002

49: The Hyena

There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a vast practical joke, though the wit thereof he but dimly discerns, and more than suspects that the joke is at nobody's expense but his own. However, nothing dispirits, and nothing seems worth while disputing. He bolts down all events, all creeds, and beliefs, and persuasions, all hard things visible and invisible, never mind how knobby; as an ostrich of potent digestion gobbles down bullets and gun flints. And as for small difficulties and worryings, prospects of sudden disaster, peril of life and limb; all these, and death itself, seem to him only sly, good-natured hits, and jolly punches in the side bestowed by the unseen and unaccountable old joker. That odd sort of wayward mood I am speaking of, comes over a man only in some time of extreme tribulation; it comes in the very midst of his earnestness, so that what just before might have seemed to him a thing most momentous, now seems but a part of the general joke. There is nothing like the perils of whaling to breed this free and easy sort of genial, desperado philosophy; and with it I now regarded this whole voyage of the Pequod, and the great White Whale its object.

"Queequeg," said I, when they had dragged me, the last man, to the deck, and I was still shaking myself in my jacket to fling off the water; "Queequeg, my fine friend, does this sort of thing often happen?" Without much emotion, though soaked through just like me, he gave me to understand that such things did often happen.

"Mr. Stubb," said I, turning to that worthy, who, buttoned up in his oil-jacket, was now calmly smoking his pipe in the rain; "Mr. Stubb, I think I have heard you say that of all whalemen you ever met, our chief mate, Mr. Starbuck, is by far the most careful and prudent. I suppose then, that going plump on a flying whale with your sail set in a foggy squall is the height of a whaleman's discretion?"

"Certain. I've lowered for whales from a leaking ship in a gale off Cape Horn."

"Mr. Flask," said I, turning to little King-Post, who was standing close by; "you are experienced in these things, and I am not. Will you tell me whether it is an unalterable law in this fishery, Mr. Flask, for an oarsman to break his own back pulling himself back-foremost into

death's jaws?"

"Can't you twist that smaller?" said Flask. "Yes, that's the law. I should like to see a boat's crew backing water up to a whale face foremost. Ha, ha! the whale would give them squint for squint, mind that!"

Here then, from three impartial witnesses, I had a deliberate statement of the entire case. Considering, therefore, that squalls and capsizings in the water and consequent bivouacks on the deep, were matters of common occurrence in this kind of life; considering that at the superlatively critical instant of going on to the whale I must resign my life into the hands of him who steered the boat – oftentimes a fellow who at that very moment is in his impetuosity upon the point of scuttling the craft with his own frantic stampings; considering that the particular disaster to our own particular boat was chiefly to be imputed to Starbuck's driving on to his whale almost in the teeth of a squall, and considering that Starbuck, notwithstanding, was famous for his great heedfulness in the fishery; considering that I belonged to this uncommonly prudent Starbuck's boat; and finally considering in what a devil's chase I was implicated, touching the White Whale: taking all things together, I say, I thought I might as well go below and make a rough draft of my will. "Queequeg," said I, "come along, you shall be my lawyer, executor, and legatee."

It may seem strange that of all men sailors should be tinkering at their last wills and testaments, but there are no people in the world more fond of that diversion. This was the fourth time in my nautical life that I had done the same thing. After the ceremony was concluded upon the present occasion, I felt all the easier; a stone was rolled away from my heart. Besides, all the days I should now live would be as good as the days that Lazarus lived after his resurrection; a supplementary clean gain of so many months or weeks as the case might be. I survived myself; my death and burial were locked up in my chest. I looked round me tranquilly and contentedly, like a quiet ghost with a clean conscience sitting inside the bars of a snug family vault.

Now then, thought I, unconsciously rolling up the sleeves of my frock, here goes for a cool, collected dive at death and destruction, and the devil fetch the hindmost.

(Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*)



TaMara Conde prepares the ground before resetting a gravestone at the Erving Center Cemetery on Wednesday. This particular marker is for two young children, from the same family, both named Nina; another stone in the cemetery has four Hannabys on it. Read more about historic gravestones in this week's MoRe section!

Letters to the Editors

Farming in Montague: Good While It Lasted

Thanks for calling our attention to the solar survey (March 23, *Town Gauges Public Opinion on Solar Siting*, Page A1). The gist of it, for those who haven't checked it out, is whether we should cover some part of Montague farmland with ground-mounted solar to meet the State's goals – or if we would be willing to pay more for electricity if the solar was installed on parking lots instead, like they are going to do in France. (The last fact was not mentioned in the survey.)

Unfortunately for me, I'm not a Montague resident, so I didn't fill out the survey. However, I have worked as a farmer in many of the fields of Montague – at least twelve, by my count. So I do have an informed opinion.

Montague has some beautiful fields. The ones I worked ranged from ½ acre to about 30 acres.

Many have views of Mount Toby or the Pocumtuck Ridge. Some are hidden well away from any paved road, and are quiet and peaceful unless a tractor is roaring. Some fields are rock-free and flat, others are hilly with a fair amount of stones.

I've planted asparagus crowns on hands and knees in the Montague snow, dragged irrigation pumps down the Montague riverbank on blazing summer days, heaped up crates of squash and tomatoes and lettuce grown in the Montague soil.

It was good while it lasted to grow food in Montague, and it has lasted about a thousand years, since the days the corn culture moved up the Land of the Long River.

Fred Beddall
Holyoke

(currently farms in Northampton)

Solution!

Sometimes a simple question requires a complex answer, and sometimes folks will just say that so they can profit from keeping the solution hidden. How do we solve Hunger in America?

Our current solution is to set up a network of food banks, layers and layers of non-profit organizations, and scores of volunteers filling bags in church basements. Selling pies and magazines and begging for change. Put a box near the cash register. SNAP benefits...

Stop just a minute and ask yourself a few questions:

Who has all the food? (Warehouses full.) Who has the means to transport food? (Big rigs and refrigerated box trucks.) Who is profiting from Hunger? (Wholesale grocers.) Who uses food banks and SNAP regularly? (Warehouse workers.)

The solution is right there. If you want to make literally hundreds of millions of dollars a year in profits from moving food, well then you also have to be the framework that feeds the hungry.

Sending pallets of food to a food pantry is exactly the same as sending to a Piggly Wiggly. The only difference is the profit margin.

In our area, the wholesale grocer isn't some evil multi-national corporation – it's America's #8 largest privately-owned business, with \$30 billion (with a B) annual revenue. Something to think about, anyway.

Chris Joseph
Greenfield

former warehouse employee,
former Greenfield city councilor

Tip: Wee the People

Urinetown: The Musical, a 2001 Broadway play with two Tony awards to its credit, is being performed by the Wild Goose Players at the Bellows Falls Opera House this March 30, March 31, and April 1.

This rural Vermont community theatre has a plethora of talent that is mind-bending to behold. I have attended three of their recent plays and left each performance as gratified and fulfilled as any I've seen,

on Broadway or off.

Timely and thought-provoking, the play allows us to see the cynical and limited nature of political revolution when profit is still prioritized over the planet. In a society beyond the luxury of ignorance, whoever takes control of the water, controls the people.

Mary Kay Mattiace
Montague City

Published weekly on Thursdays.

Every other week in July and August.
No paper the fourth week of November,
or the final week of December.

PHONE: (413) 863-8666

EMAIL:

editor@montaguereporter.org
features@montaguereporter.org
ads@montaguereporter.org
bills@montaguereporter.org
circulation@montaguereporter.org
events@montaguereporter.org
poetry@montaguereporter.org
subscriptions@montaguereporter.org

Send address changes to:

The Montague Reporter
177 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

Advertising and copy deadline is
MONDAY at NOON.

This newspaper shall not be liable for errors in advertisements, but will print without charge that part of the advertisement in which an error occurred. The publishers reserve the right to refuse advertising for any reason and to alter copy or graphics to conform to standards of the newspaper, such as they are.

Annual Subscription Rate:

\$40 for walking subscriptions;
\$50 for driving route subscriptions;
\$75 for mailed subscriptions;
\$40 to \$75 for digital subscriptions.

Call us or contact
subscriptions@montaguereporter.org
with any questions.

**WE WELCOME
YOUR LETTERS!**

ORIGINAL CONTENT ONLY, PLEASE
LIMIT 4 PER YEAR

Montague Reporter
177 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

editor@
montaguereporter.org

Sign Me Up!

\$20 { 6 months (23 issues) for our walking routes
4½ months (18 issues) for our driving routes
3 months (12 issues) for mailed subscriptions

The Montague Reporter

177 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email (optional): _____



Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Now is the time of year when parents and caregivers start making **summer camp plans**. The Greenfield 4SC and the Gill-Montague Community School Partnership have put together an online resource of camps and activities for youth, including stipended and paid positions. Explore the listings at www.tinyurl.com/camps413.

Massachusetts has expanded access to **COVID-19 treatment** by adding a hotline to access the telehealth platform. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, telehealth is a quick and free way to see if you're eligible for treatment with Paxlovid. You can access the service by calling (833) 273-6330, or completing an online assessment at mass.gov/CovidTelehealth. Clinicians are available every day from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Nice and Easy Walks continue along the bike path and downtown Turners Falls on Fridays in April, organized by the Great Falls Discovery Center. The 1- to 2-mile walk is geared for seniors but open to all who seek a little fresh air and exercise with others.

A DCR park interpreter will point out natural and historical features along the walk. Walks take place Fridays, March 31, April 7, 14, 21, and 28, from 1 to 2 p.m. This week the interpreter will weave in themes from the recent *Crossroads* exhibition.

Wear appropriate clothing, and meet at the main entrance to the Discovery Center.

Love sing-alongs? You're in luck! This Friday, March 31 at 7 p.m., Annie Patterson and Peter Blood, the creators of the *Rise Up Singing* songbook, will hold a sing-along called "Love's Gonna Carry Us" as a **benefit for the Trans Asylum Seekers Support Network**, which organizes assistance for some of the most vulnerable of asylum seekers.

The concert will be fun, uplifting, and family-friendly, and will include songs performed by Annie and Peter, in addition to sing-along numbers. The concert is at Mount Toby Meetinghouse, located at 194 Long Plain Road in Leverett. Tickets are available at the door – the suggested donation is \$20, but a sliding scale is offered.

If you want to **try pysanky**, the traditional Ukrainian art of wax-resist egg decorating, head to Memorial Hall in Old Deerfield this Saturday, April 1 between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. to try your hand at it.

You may arrive anytime, but plan to stay for an hour to complete the process. Instructions, eggs, and materials will be provided for a suggested donation of \$10 to \$20. All proceeds will go to relief for those displaced by the war in Ukraine.

It's time for another **used book sale** at the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls this Saturday, April 1 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fiction, paperbacks, kids' books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks. Hundreds of recent donations. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

The Amherst Survival Center

is holding their 15th Annual Empty Bowls fundraiser, a benefit for their food and nutrition programs, from noon to 4 p.m. this Saturday, April 1.

A \$50 ticket includes soup, salad, bread, and a handcrafted bowl, all served by local celebrities. A \$30 ticket gets you the same meal without the bowl, and children ten and under eat for \$10. The Survival Center serves people from all over the region, including Franklin County. Find out more and buy tickets at www.AmherstSurvival.org/EmptyBowls.

This Saturday there's also a benefit for the **Franklin County Community Meals program** at the Shea Theater. "Humor for Humanity" features comedian Jimmy Tingle, Shea board president Monte Belmonte, and US congressman Jim McGovern.

The food program organizes four meal sites in Orange, Turners Falls, Greenfield, and Northfield, and three food pantries: the Orange Food Pantry, the GCC Food Pantry, and the Turners Falls Mobile Food Bank. Come out and support their work and have a good time.

Doors open at 7 p.m., and the show starts at 8. The show is appropriate for all ages. Get tickets and other information at sheatheater.org.

The **Performance Project's** First Generation Ensemble comes to the Shea next Friday, April 7 with *Mother Tongue*, a multi-lingual performance developed by members of the Springfield-based intergenerational arts and leadership organization.

"Mother Tongue" incorporates movement, music, dance, and weaves together stories in Arabic, Swahili, Nepali, and English. The 90-minute original work is inspired by family stories and events from Congo/Tanzania, Bhutan/Nepal, South Sudan, Holyoke, and Springfield, and addresses themes including culture, identity, diaspora, masculinity, xenophobia, racism, and revolution.

The performance is appropriate

for ages 13 and up. Tickets are by sliding scale, \$15 to \$25, with no one turned away. Find out more at www.performanceproject.org.

Aaron Mair, former president of the Sierra Club and director of the Forever Adirondacks Campaign, will give a presentation called "**COP 27 and Environmental Justice**" at 2 p.m. on Sunday, April 16 at the Episcopal Church of Sts. James and Andrew in Greenfield.

Adults are \$15, students and seniors \$10. Tickets are available at several locations including Sadie's Bikes in Turners Falls. This event is part of the church's Environmental Sunday Series. Contact ejmai127@gmail.com for more information.

All **MassHealth recipients** will be required to renew their coverage this year in order to keep their health insurance. This yearly renewal requirement is the same as it was before temporary changes to rules due to COVID.

MassHealth recipients will receive either a blue envelope or a white envelope from MassHealth about renewal: blue means you must take action to keep your insurance, and a white envelope means no further action is needed to renew.

If you want assistance with applying or renewing, Baystate Franklin Medical Center has staff who are MassHealth-certified application counselors. Call (413) 773-2849 to make an appointment.

You may also find help and answers to questions from Community Action's community resources and advocacy program at (413) 475-1570.

The **Leverett Library** invites **artists** to show their work! Stop in at the front desk for an application to hang your two-dimensional artworks on the library walls. Each exhibit stays up for two months. Call (413) 548-9220 for more information.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

Shop locally!
Support
Montague Reporter
advertisers.

First Generation Performs Mother Tongue Friday, April 7, 7:30pm Shea Theater
An original 90-minute piece that weaves together Arabic, Swahili, Nepali, and English with themes of displacement, family, culture, masculinity, gender and prison.
Ages 13+
Tickets \$15-25
No one turned away
performanceproject.org

TURNERS FALLS WATER DEPARTMENT BEGINS READING METERS MONDAY, APRIL 3

WE HEAT FRANKLIN COUNTY

- System 2000 (Energy Kinetics)
- Thermo Pride
- Weil-McLain
- Other Major Brands
- Expert Burner Service

MACKIN FUEL TRUCKING SAND & GRAVEL
(413) 773-3622

THE LADY KILLIGREW:
Awesome Beer
Amazing Food

Awesome, Amazing Employees!

440 Greenfield Rd, Montague MA
7 Days / 8am - 11pm (at least)
(413)367-9666

CRAFT from page A1

these coffins, according to Fraser: environmental, economic, and emotional. Death is "sensitive for people," she said. "To have a personal connection with the person who makes the coffin – a lot of people reflect to me that it means a lot to them."

That squares with the experiences of Dina Stander and Lucy Fagella, two other local makers who also create materials for end-of-life rites and processes. Stander, who works as a life celebrant, death doula, and end-of-life coach, began her company Last Dance Shrouds after observing how the simple act of shrouding can open up how family and friends relate to the deceased.

"Some people never want to touch their loved one after last breath. Some people want to wash the body and dress them," Stander said. "There's a big range... With shrouding, everyone can participate."

Stander works with a local seamstress to create the shrouds, sometimes using custom textiles layered with personal meaning. The shrouds are designed with handles, nominally to solve logistical and transportation issues, but moreover to contribute to a core mission: "to reduce stress and provide an opportunity for ease" for mourners. Recent orders have included a shroud made from a family tablecloth, and matching shrouds for an elderly couple made from a quilt.

The latter was a pre-order, which aren't rare among the well-prepared. Fagella, a Greenfield-based potter who makes urns, said she meets lots of premature buyers – "especially women, maybe in their 60s and 70s, and they don't want to leave their children with all the work. Women seem to prepare more than men."

Fagella, already a longtime potter, started

making urns in 2005 after a student expressed interest in an urn for his grandfather. As with Fraser, something clicked. "I felt like the pottery, though, it's bringing beauty into this world, is not enough," she said. "And when I started doing urns and helping people through this difficult time and getting feedback – 'Oh my gosh, this beautiful piece of art made everything just a tiny bit easier,' – then I felt like I was doing something right."

While the cost of producing urns is higher than mass-market commercial options, Fagella said she is able to offer them directly to customers at about half the price of urns sold by many funeral homes, which have been significantly marked up.

Fagella, who maintains a website and social media pages, but otherwise does not advertise, said that urns now comprise about 75% of her business, and that it would be possible to make a living off the urns alone.

None of the three makers the *Reporter* spoke with said they see any shortage in demand, which makes sense; per the old adage, only death, and taxes are certain in life. Their customers represent a disparate range of funerary preferences: while Fraser almost exclusively supplies green burials and Fagella's business is tied to cremation, Stander's shrouds are, to borrow a fashion buzzword, versatile.

Still, the three are united by an environmentally-conscious approach to their work: Stander said she tries to use organic and preferably local textiles; Fagella offers biodegradable urns; and Fraser's dependence on willow is both a boon and limitation. Willow is a relatively sustainable, carbon-sequestering crop, but there are current-

ly few commercial growers in the United States, limiting the supply and making it much pricier than in the United Kingdom. For a single coffin, Fraser will spend at least \$600 on willow.

"Last year was really a scramble to get all the material I needed," Fraser said, adding that new farms are springing up around the country. "A really great weaver, Sandra Kehoe, got some land in upstate New York and is planting a whole bunch of willow. Hopefully by next year I'll be able to buy a lot of my supply from her. I might go help her harvest!"

In all three cases, the simplicity of the process cuts out the need for the strong chemical agents used in traditional burial, and helps avoid the biological devastation and carbon footprint of many harvested and imported materials, such as hardwood from South American forests.

Stander said she sees the turn in death care as a Baby Boomer phenomenon, akin to the natural birth movement, but locates the environmental urge as an outgrowth of current ecological turmoil. "You can't sit and consider your mortality without being aware that the planet is in deep shit," she said. "We, collectively, are facing a lot of change and death and endings."

Fraser said she prefers to not ship her coffins, but wants to see the practice of coffin-weaving continue to develop locally across North America.

"In the next 20 years, I would love to see each section of the country have a coffin maker who can supply to their state, or a couple states around them," she said. "My mission is to encourage handcrafts in this country, and encourage more personal connection in death care, and encourage people to buy locally and sustainably."

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

Pipione's SPORT SHOP

- Fishing supplies; Live bait
- Fishing & Hunting Licenses
- Paintball & CO₂ Refills
- Guns & Ammo

Open 7 am 7 days a week
101 Ave A, Turners Falls 414.863.4246

Dudek Tax Service
10 Masonic Ave
Turners Falls
MA 01376
Frank J. Dudek

413.863.5394 - Office
413.775.3327 - Cell
frankd_74@yahoo.com

Rau's Auto
COMPLETE AUTO REPAIR
(413) 367-2475
531 Turners Falls Rd. Montague

24 hour emergency towing
Best service licensed Mechanics

ERVING from page A1

will not be paid until they come into compliance, and a \$50 penalty will be assessed each week for the board member responsible for the minutes.

Selectboard member William Bembury recommended striking this final section in its entirety. Selectboard member Scott Bastarache and chair Jacob Smith agreed.

The board also agreed to a proposed bylaw which would put in place a winter on-street overnight parking ban. Cars parked would be towed, and their owners fined, in addition to all fees related to towing and subsequent storage.

Town administrator Bryan Smith suggested that this bylaw include language stating that people should somehow be made aware of this law. Jacob Smith suggested placing road signs about the ban at the town lines, and setting up a “reverse-911” system for notification of snow emergencies.

These proposed bylaws will be voted on at the upcoming annual town meeting.

Church Street Bridge

The selectboard met with the finance and capital planning committees to discuss the annual town meeting, the FY’24 budget, and the Church Street bridge repair project.

The bridge needs to be repaired, per order of the state Department of Transportation, and Church Street has been reduced to one-way traffic until that happens. Bryan Smith prepared an informative letter for the boards to use in their deliberations.

The most pressing matter was that the town must decide whether to pursue state funding for the project through the state Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). The other option would be for the town to take out a loan for the estimated \$1.6 million project, which the selectboard received approval for from the town citizens at last year’s annual town meeting.

Jacob Smith explained that the timeline for the project’s completion under the two scenarios differs by as little as six months, with the loan-funded option being the faster scenario.

The committees heard from a number of citizens, as well as representatives of the highway and police departments. One Church Street resident said she liked the street being one-way, and felt no rush to complete the bridge project. A resident of North Street said he found the increased traffic very bothersome and would like the project to be completed as soon as possible.

Police chief Robert Holst reported that there has been no difference in number of accidents or disturbances as a result of the bridge closure, only that they now take place more on North Street, which he noted was very narrow and so already rather dangerous.

The committees decided to pursue the TIP funding, at the fin com’s recommendation.

FY’24 Budget

The committees continued work on the town’s FY’24 budget, seeking to reduce the gap between departments’ requests and the amount the town is allowed to raise in taxes this year.

At their previous meeting on

March 13, the selectboard and finance committee had asked the school committee to reduce their budget request, which had jumped due to new out-of-district special education costs, by \$350,000.

Some funding is available to offset the special education expenses through the state’s “circuit breaker” program, but that funding is allotted the year after expenses are incurred, and depends on how much the state has available. Erving received money under this program for the current year, but cannot know for certain what can be expected next year.

At Monday’s meeting, the total Education line of the draft budget summary had been reduced by \$228,371.

School committee chair Jennifer Eichorn was again in attendance, but no other representatives from the school committee were present, though all were invited. A resident expressed disappointment that no representative of the teachers’ union was present to help explain why the district could not make the requested cuts. Jacob Smith agreed that he was also disappointed.

Finance committee member Daniel Hammock recalled a time a couple decades ago when the selectboard, fin com, and school committee had very adversarial relations, and expressed hope that they could maintain the better relations that have developed since then.

Bastarache pointed out that the teachers’ union was meeting at the same time. Fin com chair Debra Smith asked whether the elementary school principal had to be at that meeting, and Bastarache replied they did not.

Debra Smith commented that all the other department heads could make the meeting to discuss the budget shortfall, and that “it’s very frustrating to be making these cuts and not have a principal, superintendent, or business manager to ask these questions to.”

Discussion turned to whether the town should hold off on depositing \$273,000 into stabilization in FY’24. Money was withdrawn from that fund to pay for the new library construction, and this would be the fourth scheduled payment to replenish it.

Other Business

A 19-article warrant was reviewed for the annual town meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, May 10.

The town found out recently it was approved for a grant it had applied for to fund cataloging of historical buildings. The grant provides \$20,000 as long as the town agrees to match it. The joint meeting approved requesting the funds for this project at the annual town meeting.

The board approved a new three-year contract with Casella for curbside trash pickup.

At the end of the three-hour-plus meeting, the board reached a discussion of a proposal to create a cable advisory committee, and devoted about two minutes to it. The cable committee would be comprised of three members, appointed by the selectboard for three-year terms, and would take on duties currently performed by the selectboard. Whether to create this committee will also be up for a vote at the annual town meeting.

**MONTAGUE REPORTER**

Kate and Easton, both MR reporters, made it all the way to Moab, Utah before getting too homesick to not read the paper.

ON THE ROAD**AGREES** from page A1

will help secure a “substitute ceremonial site” for the tribes.

The site specifically named by the agreement is the long-controversial “Mariamante” parcel, a 12-acre plot of land on the corner of Main and West Gill roads.

The property was purchased in 2004 by the town of Gill, originally to prevent the construction of a 60-unit condominium development. When the town prepared to market it to other developers, however, generations-old public speculation surfaced that it may be the site of an unusual Native “spokes burial” referenced in a 19th-century local history.

Archaeological studies in 2005 and 2008 were inconclusive, finding evidence of graves that may have dated to the colonial era, but a 2009 survey of the field with ground-penetrating radar appeared to yield much more interesting results – hundreds of excavations below the plow zone, scattered throughout the field, according to a public presentation by a researcher in October 2010.

That research was subsequently impounded by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, however, in an apparent effort to protect subsurface cultural resources from the public – and the town of Gill has been perplexed ever since by the large, unmarketable parcel on its main road. Each year, local farmers bid for the right to hay the field.

The Memorandum of Understanding in Principle (MOUP) released last week between the hydropower company and Native representatives and allies appears to provide a solution to this stalemate. A section titled “Flooded Cultural Resources Remediation Plan” ties the parcel to the 1676 massacre of Native noncombatants at the Falls, which was largely perpetrated on land now underwater:

Part of the Village/Native camp that was attacked on May 19, 1676 is now under the impoundment waters known as Barton Cove. This historic battlefield site is a part of the National Park Service Battlefield Study and no longer accessible. To remediate the flooding and impoundment of this important cultural and historic site, FirstLight shall work with the town of Gill in pursuing the funding needed to purchase a substitute ceremonial site located nearby above the falls in Gill, Massachusetts, home to documented native burials associated with the May 19 attack, commonly referred to as the Mariamante / Conway Site, as part of the future National Battlefield Monument Historic Park.

“For the first time in the history of these hydropower facilities, there is participation by Native people,” Rich Holschuh, tribal historic preservation officer of the Elnu Abenaki, told the *Reporter*. “When they were built, there was no federal process in place for tribal participation.... Given that the term of the license is up to 50 years, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we need to make the most of it.”

Attempts to reach Liz Coldwind Santana-Kiser, tribal historic preservation officer of the Chaubunagungamaug Band of Nipmuck Indians, were unsuccessful as of press time.

“FirstLight is happy to cooperate in this effort, out of respect for the tribes and the cultural significance of the area to them,” said company spokesperson Claire Belanger.

While the negotiation over cultural resources is only one of five tracks FirstLight has convened with federally-recognized stakeholders – the others are on “flows and fish passage,” “recreation,” “whitewater recreation,” and “shoreline erosion” – Belanger said that it “should be able to move forward on its own,” without being contingent on any of these other negotiations succeeding.

Belanger also confirmed that FirstLight is making an effort to show the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission partial progress in the settlement talks in the hope that further progress after the March 31 deadline will be taken into account in the relicensing. “[T]hat is the hope and expectation based on other relicensing processes,” she said.

Gill town administrator Ray Purington said the town was surprised to learn this week of the proposal to work with the power company to “pursu[e] the funding needed” to make the Mariamante parcel a historic park.

“The town was not part of the cultural resources discussions, or negotiations,” Purington told the *Reporter*. “Inclusion of this possibility – of funding to purchase the Mariamante property – is an interesting possibility for the use of the property, and the town looks forward to being part of further conversation.”

“The agreement is not to provide funding, but to assist the town of Gill in pursuing the funding,” Belanger replied when asked whether FirstLight would be able to contribute money toward the site’s purchase. “However, FirstLight also has agreed to provide access to its own lands for ceremonial and other purposes.”

“We just ask them to make it hap-

pen,” said Joe Graveline, a senior advisor with the Nolumbeka Project, Inc., a nonprofit group that advocates for Native interests in the region. “If they want to write a grant, they can write a grant; if they want to get it on the National Register [of Historic Places] and create a situation where somebody else can easily write the grant, that’s fine, too.”

“It would be great to get the burden of that land off of the town of Gill,” Nolumbeka president David Brule said of the agreement. “They bought it with the intention of creating a solar farm.... My understanding is that when the ground-penetrating radar work was done, it was determined that there were a little shy of 200 features of disturbed ground, which led everybody to assume that it was a burial ground, and possibly for individuals killed in the massacre.”

Graveline, who was present for the radar survey in 2009 and has been participating in the ongoing National Park Service Battlefield Grant study of the event, said that on May 22, 1676, three days after the massacre, English troops marching north from Hadley turned around when they saw fires burning on the high ground.

“We know that somewhere around 300 people die in the massacre,” Graveline said. “They weren’t going to walk away and leave the bodies. They gathered them up out of the river, they brought them up onto the high ground, and I think they spent days doing cremation burials.”

Graveline said that he and Doria Kutrubes, the researcher who led the radar project, counted 286 excavations. “She made it clear that there were European laid-out burials underneath the roadways,” he added. “They could be pauper burials, or slave burials, that spilled over from the [Riverside] graveyard. But mostly on that property were Indigenous-style circular burials and cremation burials.”

I’m hopeful that the licensees will not just be responsive, but be cognizant of the fact that it’s incumbent upon them to deal with this,” said Holschuh. “The history of the 400 years cannot be ignored any longer, and it’s time to start dealing with these things.”

“And this is this is a really good place to start. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and it needs to be engaged.”

“They may not chip in any money,” quipped Graveline, “but they damn well better show up to do the heavy lifting.”



PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

Renaissance Excavating, Inc.




COMPLETE SITE WORK

Septic & Drainage Systems | Sand, Gravel & Loam

Main Road, Gill
Douglas Edson 413.863.4462
 renexc@gmail.com cell 413.834.2201

INFO@RENBUILD.NET
413-863-8316



RENAISSANCE BUILDERS

WWW.RENBUILD.NET • PO BOX 272, TURNERS FALLS, MA 01376

RENAISSANCE PAINTING

SINCE 1970
 LICENSED, INSURED
 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR PAINTING, ALL PHASES
 POWER WASHING

BRIAN MCCUE, PRESIDENT
 240 GREENFIELD ROAD • MONTAGUE, MA 01351
 PHONE & FAX: 413-367-9896 • RENAISSANCEPAINTINGCOMPANY.COM

GILL from page A1

and walk-in hours for town departments. In order to remain accessible, meetings will take place at the Slate Memorial Library, Gill Elementary School, the fire station, or the outdoor picnic tables on the town common.

Gill Gets a School Zone

New school-zone speed limit signs are coming to Gill Elementary, following a grant award from MassDOT. The signs will be solar-powered, and provide dynamic speed feedback to cars passing on Boyle Road.

"I considered it to be a long-shot grant application," said Purington, noting that the state only funded 50 school-zone speed signs in the state. "I don't know if we're the token poster child for western Mass," he said with a laugh, "but Colrain

got one, too!"

To use the signs, the town is required to establish an official school zone in front of the elementary, and paint the word "school" on the road.

"Let's make sure it's spelled right," suggested selectboard member Randy Crochier.

Other Business

Barbara Watson was appointed to the Gill Council on Aging, through the end of June. "We're an aging community," said Crochier, "and this council does a lot of work."

Selectboard member Greg Sneider added that the council does important work with the Gill-Montague Senior Center, which is a "pretty big hub for seniors," providing frequent meals, exercise, games, and other activities. "Randy, you and I will be over there soon playing games together," he added.

"I look forward to it," answered Crochier.

The selectboard approved a new board of fire engineers for the FY'24 fiscal year. The members are Gene Beaubien, William Borcy, Edward Curtis, Stuart Elliott, Andrew Howell, William Kimball, Greg Parody, Mitchell Waldron, Forester Menson, and Jake Whitney.

The board renewed the seasonal restaurant liquor license for 2023 for the Turners Falls Schuetzen Verein club.

A flu and COVID vaccine clinic will be at the Gill-Montague Senior Center this Friday, March 31 from 4 to 7 p.m. Rabies vaccinations for dogs and cats will be available at the Franklin County Fairgrounds this Saturday, April 1 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The rabies vaccinations are \$20, cash only.



Tip of the week ...

Check your water heater regularly for leaks and rust. A leaking water heater can damage the floor it sits on and lead to costly repairs. Signs of rust or water around the unit may indicate a need for a professional inspection, as small leaks and rust can lead to sediment buildup and major problems in the future.

We have more than insurance. We have experience...

PARTRIDGE ZSCHAU INSURANCE

25 Millers Falls Road
(413) 863-4331
www.pzinc.com

auto | home | business

GUEST EDITORIAL

Natural Burial: A Return to the Earth

By **JUDITH LOREI**

MONTAGUE – Throughout my decade as a green burial educator and advocate, I've talked with hundreds of people about green burial at conferences, during presentations and in classrooms. I've observed three things.

One: Many people don't know anything about it. Some – the younger ones – even ask, "Is that a thing?"

Two: People are interested in it for many different reasons.

Three: Those who have considered green burial as an option for themselves often don't know how to pursue it.

Let's consider these observations one by one.

One: Yes, green burial is a thing. What we now call "green burial" here in the United States is referred to in many countries as just "burial."

Green or natural burial foregoes embalming. Cement grave liners or vaults are not used. Coffins are made of biodegradable materials such as soft woods (think plain pine boxes), cardboard, or wicker, or the body is wrapped in a shroud. The burial depth is three to four feet deep, the grave is slightly mounded, and the dirt allowed to settle over time.

A grave marker may be used, but not the type we are used to seeing in a conventional cemetery such as upright polished marble or granite. Instead, the marker may be made of local fieldstone, river rock, or wood meant to decompose over a short period of time. Green burial is a simple burial.

Two: People want green burial for lots of different reasons. Here are a few.

Environmental: Green burial is the most environmentally-friendly option for body disposition. Conventional burial in the cemeteries we drive by every day uses tremendous amounts of resources. According to the Green Burial Council, every year in the US we bury 4.3 million gallons of embalming fluid, 20 million board-feet of hardwood, 1.6 million tons of concrete, and 81.5 tons of copper, bronze, and steel.

The use of fertilizers for weed-free lawns and large equipment for cemetery maintenance also contributes to a substantial carbon footprint. While less resource-heavy, cremation uses fossil fuels, releases



This new green burial section will open in April at Montague's Highland Cemetery.

mercury into the air, and produces CO₂ emissions. With green burial, everything that goes into the ground is readily biodegradable.

Financial: Green burial reduces costs by eliminating embalming and the use of a grave liner or vault, neither of which are required by state law. (Funeral homes may require embalming for a viewing, and cemeteries set their own regulations about liners and vaults. However, these decisions are at the discretion of funeral homes and cemeteries.)

The coffins used for green burial are significantly less expensive than hardwood or metal caskets. A simple coffin can be made by a family member, friend, local carpenter, or artist. Some people purchase a wood or cardboard coffin through a funeral home or a big box store. Others prefer a simple shroud to wrap the body where it is placed directly in the grave. The headstone is small and flat, or close to the ground, and fieldstone, quarry stone, or river rock can be sourced locally to reduce expense.

Personal: Those who take part in the green burial of a loved one often report a strong sense of connection to the person who died, and to the community who participates in the burial. In Massachusetts as in many states, the next-of-kin may act as the funeral director to transport the body, care for the body at home, and arrange for burial or cremation, provided that they have the proper paperwork from the town's Board of Health.

Some funeral directors will work with families to provide certain services, such as transport of the body and filing of paperwork. Death care educators or end-of-life navigators can support the family in creating their own graveside service. Graveside memorialization could include singing, reflections, poems, prayers, and lowering the body into the grave.

An alternative option to closing the grave with a backhoe operated by cemetery staff is for mourners to use shovels to fill the grave with dirt, thereby closing it themselves –

a last act of love and service for the person who died.

Three: So, where can you have a green burial?

The first modern green cemetery was established in 1996 in Westminster, South Carolina. Today there are approximately 350 green cemeteries in the US and Canada.

The Green Burial Council (www.greenburialcouncil.org), an organization that certifies green cemeteries and funeral products, classifies green cemeteries in three categories: *hybrid cemeteries*, which allow conventional practices such as vaults and grave liners as well as natural burial; *natural cemeteries*, which allow full-body interment in the ground, without embalming, using a biodegradable container, and without a liner or vault; and *conservation cemeteries*, natural cemeteries established in partnership with conservation organizations, which include strict conservation management plans.

Massachusetts does not yet have a natural cemetery or a conservation cemetery, though Green Burial Massachusetts and the Kestrel Land Trust are working diligently to establish a conservation cemetery in western Mass.

Our state, however, does have a growing number of hybrid cemeteries. There are 41 cemeteries in 28 Massachusetts towns that allow green burial in their existing conventional cemetery. In some of these cemeteries, green graves are placed among the conventional graves; in others, such as Montague's Highland Cemetery, a separate section will be set aside exclusively for green burial. The Highland Woods green burial section opens this April.

Gill, Wendell, Leyden, and Shutesbury already allow green burial in at least one of their cemeteries. You can find the list of cemeteries that allow green burial on the Green Burial Massachusetts website (www.greenburialma.org).

If you want a green burial and your cemetery does not permit it, consider joining your town's cemetery commission, or contact them to let them know about this option.

Judith Lorei is a Montague Cemetery Commission member, and is the co-founder and former president of Green Burial Massachusetts, Inc.

RECYCLE

BOTTLES & CANS
Week of April 3 in Montague

more info? call: 863-2054

WENDELL COUNTRY STORE

"It's just a stone's throw from reality."
Groceries - Videos - Home Baked Goods
Beer - Wine - Liquor
MON - SAT 7-9 SUNDAY 8-8
978-544-8646
Lockes Village Rd.
1/2 mile south of Wendell Center

Formerly Jay K's – bigger & better!

Connecticut River
Liquor & Wine

Open Mon-Thurs 10am-10pm
Fri & Sat 10am - 11pm • Sun Noon-8pm
123 Avenue A • Turners Falls
863-5066

GREENFIELD FARMERS COOPERATIVE EXCHANGE
Locally Owned Since 1918

269 High Street - Greenfield
(413) 773-9639

Local Farmer-Owned

Products for the home, farm, pets, yard & garden

If you Feed it - Seed it - Weed it We GOT it!

www.greenfieldfarmerscoop.com

NANCY L. DOLE BOOKS & EPHEMERA

20 State Street, Bucklandside
Shelburne Falls
413-625-9850
ndole@crocker.com

OPEN three days a week
Tues, Weds, Thurs - 11 to 6
(also by chance or appt.)

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

HUGE WASHERS!

HOT DRYERS!

Open 365 Days
6 A.M. - 10 P.M.

SUZEE'S THIRD STREET LAUNDRY
TURNERS FALLS

413-863-1376

Bryan Hobbs Remodeling LLC

Blown Cellulose Insulation • Spray Foam Insulation
Airsealing • Energy Audits • Replacement Doors & Windows

Email: bryanhobbsremodeling@gmail.com
Now Accepting Credit Cards

Office: (413) 775-9006
Lic # 083982
Reg # 139564

mass save PARTNER

Bryan G. Hobbs
PO Box 1535
Greenfield, MA 01302

Overwhelmed by stuff? Try Franklin County's Most Convenient

IN-TOWN SELF STORAGE
UPPER END OF WELLS STREET, GREENFIELD
413-883-7323

Easy in-town location
Secure 24-hour access

VARIETY OF SIZES THE BEST PRICES

OFFICE AT 11 WELLS COURT, GREENFIELD, MA

Contractors, Flea Marketers, Tradeshow Vendors and Artists encouraged to inquire

CAFÉS from page A1

and cake is not surprising.

Since its beginning in 2011, the organization has spread quickly across Europe, North America, Australia, and Asia. As of now 15,637 Death Cafés have been held in 83 countries, and an interactive feature on the website (www.deathcafe.com) allows you to find the nearest upcoming café.

Allan, who lives in Turners Falls, started our local Death Café in May 2022. She had heard of Death Cafés and brought the idea up to her husband, Tim de Christopher, and he was enthusiastic about seeing if they could find other interested people.

"We follow the guidelines of Death Cafés," she says. "We meet to talk about our mortal lives on this planet and to eat cake, or whatever someone brings."

Though it might seem that only elderly people would want to engage, Allan says, "We have no age guidelines. It's interesting to get perspectives from people of any age." Though inclusive, participants do need to register in advance, and the numbers have been limited to 12. If anyone drops out, a space opens for a new person.

"As this group has settled in, we've recognized we're better able to swim in the deep end if we don't have 'drop-ins,'" Allan explains. "However, we understand there will be people who think they want to join but who may find it's not for them, and they'll want to drop out. So there's no hard-and-fast commitment."

Woody Allen once said, "I'm not afraid of death, I just don't want to be there when it happens." The quote always evokes laughter, but it also touches on the fear common to everyone when they consider their mortality. An experience that affects each and every

human is often not talked about at all. The Death Café turns this on its head.

"I am well aware that there are many of us who fear and dread the idea, let alone the actuality of death," says William Hays, an artist in Turners Falls and a regular Death Café member. "Many, many folks can barely bring themselves to talk of their own, or a loved one's, death. The Death Café was a supportive, sometimes lighthearted group where this most dreaded of subjects could be talked about with ease.

"Each participant had a different view of the subjects contained within talking of death. I like to think that we each helped each other with the difficult parts while we accompanied each other in the shared perspectives and experiences."

The conversations at the Death Café range from the metaphysical to the practical. Lyn Clark, who describes herself as a joiner, not an organizer, says, "At 88, I was the oldest in the group, and hadn't given much thought to the end-of-life process – which, given my advanced age, I should have. Those in the group provided information I have found very useful, and I am finally getting my affairs, medically and legally, put in order. For that I am grateful to Pam, and the group."

The things she learned at the Café will make everything easier for her children when she is gone. Clark says she learned that "we all approach our own endings in different ways, with different beliefs. And that we all want that process to be what we wish, and not necessarily what a doctor or an offspring wants for us, and that we need to make that very clear while we are still able to do so."

Discussions at the Death Café meander, but members generally reach a consensus at the end of each meeting regarding what they



Death cafés provide the opportunity to talk about mortality in a friendly, supportive group context.

will discuss when they meet again. "The subject is not so strict that other topics can't come up in the course of our two-hour conversation," says Allan.

Everyone interviewed for this story said there has been far more laughter than tears as participants navigate all the issues around death. End-of-life care, funerals, estate planning, spiritual connections to the dead, and local resources for care have all been discussed.

"Few subjects contain the depth of emotion for love and loss as does death," says Hays. "This is not a morbid or depressing realization. It is the reality of being alive: death is inevitably part of every life. Just pick up the newspaper any day of the week and death is in the headlines. Learning to

continue living in the wake of death is important, because the experience is so shocking and has the ability to reorder and upset nearly every facet of one's life."

"I've learned that I'm not so alone as I contemplate my own mortality," says Allan. "It's been wonderful to sit once a month with others who share the need or the desire to move away from the taboo of talking about death."

"I've been surprised by having made new friends through the Café and the friendships feel true and deep," says Hays.

To anyone thinking about joining, Allan says: "Our group holds diverse opinions and beliefs, and it's important to listen with curiosity and openness. This isn't a place to try to bring anyone over to your belief system. And, although we've all experienced grief and loss, this is not a bereavement support group. We meet to recognize our finite lives on this planet – and to eat cake."

Cake, or the snacks someone chooses to bring, so often associated with celebrations, seems entirely fitting for a group that celebrates life by talking about its inevitable end.

Anyone interested in attending the Death Café can contact Allan at pamallan.x@gmail.com or Suzette Snow-Cobb at suzettesnowcobb@gmail.com. They will be put on a waiting list, and notified when space is available.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 12 and marks one whole year of meetings. Allan says she expects that some people will choose to leave the group then, and places will be open.

A new Death Café is also starting across the river in Greenfield, hosted by the Interfaith Council. It begins Monday, April 10 at 7 p.m. at the Second Congregational Church on Court Square.



CARE from page A1

providers on what kind of medical care someone wants before they are unable to express those desires for themselves. She also works with families who are facing a terminal diagnosis, helping them navigate treatment and the big-picture questions that this kind of diagnosis carries.

"My overall mission," Miller said, "is to build community capacity for people to be able to show up for this part of life for themselves, and also for our neighbors and the people we love."

One major problem that frequently goes unaddressed, Miller said, is dementia.

"For a lot of people it's the most terrifying thing," she said. "Advance directives often imagine less-common scenarios – like, you were in a car accident and you are on life support and want to be taken off life support – but one out of three of us are going to die with dementia. You can delay a lot of decisions, but this is one you really can't, if you want to have your fears and hopes around it addressed."

Miller first became involved in death work by volunteering for hospice. Now she offers education and advocacy around the process of transitioning to palliative care, and encourages her clients not to wait until the last minute to seek it.

Grief and Ritual

Dina Stander of Shutesbury, whose website titles her "writer, end-of-life navigator, and coach," began her career in death work as a funeral celebrant, someone who crafts and facilitates end-of-life celebrations, memorials, funerals, and burials.

"Then people started asking for other support," she said, "I wanted to learn more about how people die, and what happens."

So she kept learning, spending many years as a hospice volunteer, just as Miller did. Both women recommend volunteering with hospice as the best entry point, and foundation, for engaging in death work.

"My job is to meet people where they are," Stander continued. "My focus is on *death wellness* – that means understanding that we are living on a planet that is well on the road to mass extinction, and that our world is changing very fast. A lot of what death is, is change. To be present and responsive to the changes, we need to have a more fluid understanding of our mortality."

Funerals and other rituals are a primary way people do this. Miller and Stander each offer a slate of services for facilitating grief, including the creation of burial shrouds, celebrant services, grief companionship, obituaries, memorial projects, family support groups, and education about home funerals and green burials.

"Another piece is legacy work," Miller shared. "This could mean creative ways to stay connected to the people we love.... It can also happen when people are grieving, and they're looking for ritual and creative practices to stay connected, and kind of rebuild a relationship after the death."

Pandemic Learning

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased certain anxieties and problems around death, and has also opened up more room for important conversations.

"Someone told me that at the beginning of the pandemic their kid, who was 11 at the time, became so anxious about going out into the world, bringing home the virus and killing his family," Stander recalled. "There's a weightiness to social interaction that didn't used to be there." This complication affected me-

morial services as much as anywhere else. "I have literally buried people who caught COVID at a funeral," Stander lamented. "Funeral homes were not requiring that people mask, which is insane."

"People were so isolated," Miller said. "Hospices stopped having volunteers.... We've seen the great impact on so many people who are living in institutions without loved ones having access. There was a lot of moment-to-moment, week-to-week talking through what happens if you end up at the hospital: What are the treatment options, and is it better to stay home or seek care?"

While the long-term legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural attitudes and practices toward death remains to be seen, it has already created new conditions, for better or worse. "Telehealth is, structurally, something that could make medical care more accessible to people. It's sort of a question how much this is going to continue," Miller said.

"I appreciate the ways that this conversation can happen more freely now than it used to," offered Stander.

Stander also said she has noticed an increase in so-called deaths of despair. "Last summer, when lockdowns lifted, I started seeing more pandemic fallout deaths – people who started using drugs and alcohol again because of the isolation, lost work, and pain," she said. "This has been brutal."

According to Miller, people both within and outside of the medical field became very invested in improving experiences of death and dying in response to the AIDS epidemic.

"Communities had to figure out how to create rituals and healing places, and support systems for people who were abandoned and not valued in the general culture," she

said. "Many important teachers and thinkers in the world of death and dying, palliative care, and hospice came out of the experience of offering care to people who were dying of AIDS in major cities in this country, a lot of them homeless."

These included Frank Ostaseski, one of Miller's teachers, who founded the San Francisco Zen Hospice Project.

"It gave people a really unique experience and insight," she said. "I think it also made it really clear how many problems there were, because of the extreme homophobia and the absence of resources and protections."

Need for Change

Both Miller and Stander expressed grave concerns over how people will find support in the coming years.

"People in death care are talking about a tsunami of death coming," Stander warned. "People are living longer, but they're not necessarily living better. They are struggling with the infirmities of old age over a longer period of time. It's rough, being old."

Miller shared similar thoughts. "There is a lot of violence and inequity in how we live, and how we die, and the transition from treatment to palliative care is really problematic.... I would love for all doctors to be trained to treat the symptoms of disease as well as the symptoms of treatment."

Both death workers were adamant that they do not want to be a part of creating a new private professional death care industry. Rather, they are hoping to spearhead cultural and political change.

Stander emphasized the need for funding and resources for death care. "We need to create infrastructure to support people," she said. "Families aren't big enough, and we

are already stretched thin... There are people with one or two jobs already and then they come home and need to take care of someone who is dying. It can take two days of phone calls to even get an appointment to get your elderly mother care, and then you have to take time off work to actually get her there.

"It's a huge burden on people. We need better community resources so there's respite, so people aren't on their own. The neighbor-to-neighbor networks are a good example for creating infrastructure for aging in place."

Stander discussed the older Baby Boomers, who are currently up to 77 years old and make up over 21% of the population. "Someone who is 75 now," she said, "and doing great and independent – in five years, when they are 80 and their health starts to deteriorate more, is going to need more help from family and neighbors. The government is aware that this is coming at them, but is so dysfunctional that they are not setting up programs to meet this need. I really think municipalities have to do it."

Miller told us she wants to empower people to know that we can support each other, "not that it's easy and it's going to be beautiful."

"When we do this, we need a lot of support," she continued. "Ideally it's creating a situation where we don't need doulas – where resources are adequate, and people are gaining experiences and talking about them, sharing skills, and showing up for each other. Sometimes it's just listening to someone who is exhausted and sad, and encouraging them, and giving them support."

Emily Eliot Miller's work, and links to death care resources, can be found at www.deathjewel.com.

Dina Stander's work and links can be found at www.dinastander.com.



PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

Doug's Auto Body
Doug Smith - Owner

PRECISION REPAIRS

MA Reg. #RS2190

Ph. (413) 863-2785 39 Center Road
Fax: (413) 863-0120 Gill, MA 01354

FREE ESTIMATES FREE LOANER CARS
REPAIRS ON FOREIGN & DOMESTIC CARS AND TRUCKS

LIC #36550-EL 1-413-345-1687

ELECTRICIAN
CHRIS M. STRAKOSE

RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL • INDUSTRIAL
ALL ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS AND REPAIRS
EMERGENCY SERVICE

9 SWAMP ROAD
MONTAGUE, MA 01351
EMAIL: CSTRAKOSE.ELEC@GMAIL.COM

FULLY INSURED FREE CONSULTATION

STONEDWORK
— BUILD. REBUILD. MEND. —

R. SKELTON, WALLER
(413) 367-2435 • skelton.rob@gmail.com

BILL from page A1

choosing a death on their own terms.”

The issue of medical aid in dying first came before Massachusetts voters in 2012 in the form of a ballot initiative, which failed 51% to 49%. In a 2019 poll by Suffolk University 70% of people said they supported medical aid in dying, and newly-elected governor Maura Healey has also expressed support for the legislation publicly.

While the legislature has never voted on the End of Life Options Act, it was reported favorably out of the joint committee on public health for the first time in 2019, when Comerford was serving as chair. The pandemic, however, thwarted any chance of it passing in 2020.

The bill was reintroduced and made it to the joint committee on health care financing last session, but the House took no action, and it again failed to make it to a floor vote.

“We heard from a lot of doctors who felt this was an important thing they wanted to do,” Comerford said. “Public opinion has shifted so much I feel like it’s really quite a ripe ground for making some important progress.”

The End of Life Options Act is again before the public health committee, this time *sans* Comerford. First and Second Franklin representatives Natalie Blais and Susannah Whipp are both co-sponsors of the bill’s House version.

Authority and Access

“We’re talking about bodily autonomy at the end of someone’s life,” Dr. Peg Sandeen told the *Reporter*. “It’s not a question of whether or not they’re going to die. The question is how they want that to happen.”

Dr. Sandeen is a professional social worker and the CEO of Death With Dignity, a nonprofit end-of-life legal aid group advocating for medical-aid-in-dying bills across the country.

The US Supreme Court took up the issue of medical aid in dying in 1997 after it was legalized in Oregon. The Court ruled that while there was no constitutional guarantee of a “right to die,” states could decide whether physicians should be allowed to provide life-ending treatment. The Court would go on to uphold the Oregon law in 2006 over federal attempts to prosecute physicians.

Last December, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court issued a similar ruling, asserting that there is no constitutional guarantee to medical assistance in death but leaving it to the legislature to decide whether doctors should be allowed to provide it.

“It put the ball squarely in our court,” Comerford said of the state court ruling. “It should be up to a body that is deliberative and research-based, and that is the legislature.”

Dying people suffering with the pain or debilitating effects of diseases like cancer, Parkinson’s, and multiple sclerosis often choose to forgo treatment, or stop eating and drinking, as a way to end their suffering sooner. Comerford and Sandeen have both listened to tragic stories of people forced to make these kinds of decisions, and of their families.

“When I work with patients, [it’s] not a controversial issue,” Sandeen said. “It might be controversial in the media or legislature, but in families, this is not controversial – this

is about a patient making a choice with their doctor about how they want to die.”

Medical aid in dying was legalized in Switzerland in 1942, and in ten other countries since then, including the Netherlands and Belgium in 2002, Canada in 2016, and parts of Australia this year. Doctor injection of patients, an act recognized as “euthanasia” by some medical journals, is legal and practiced in the Netherlands. Massachusetts’s End of Life Options Act would not allow a doctor, or anyone else, to end another person’s life.

Ten US states – Vermont, Maine, New Jersey, Montana, Colorado, California, Oregon, Washington, New Mexico and Hawaii – and Washington, DC now allow medically assisted death. Legislation is also pending in 11 states including Connecticut, New York, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Maryland.

However, the medications used in Europe to cause death are scarce and expensive in the United States, in part because European drug manufacturers refuse to sell such products to a country that might use them to administer capital punishment. The European Union restricts the sale to the US of certain barbiturates commonly used for the death penalty.

“Taking them off the market has harmed patients here who needed them,” Sandeen said. “That has led to us having to figure out a Plan B.”

In the states where it is allowed, therefore, a mixture of four medications is typically prescribed, which when taken orally work to slow a patient’s breathing and stop their heart. Diazepam, digoxin, and morphine sulfate can be combined with either amitriptyline or propranolol to produce this effect.

Community of Care

“Unfortunately, most of us who came to this movement came because we saw someone have a horrible dying experience,” Sandeen said. She watched her husband suffer for years with untreatable HIV-related illnesses before his death in 1993.

“He died badly, and it was horrible,” Sandeen said. “It wasn’t necessarily the suffering.... He wanted to have control over the timing and manner of his death.”

Under the proposed law, modeled after the statutes in other states, an adult patient with a prognosis of no more than six months to live may first verbally request a medically-assisted death from their doctor, and then submit the request in writing, signed by two witnesses. The dying person is then referred to a psychiatrist to screen for any mental health disorders that could impair their judgment or decision-making.

“We need to make sure people know all their options when they are faced with a terminal diagnosis, including robust palliative care,” Comerford explained.

The doctor would be required to notify the patient of comfort care options – ways to treat their symptoms, and not the disease, for the remaining months of their life – before writing a prescription. The law says the patient must administer the medication themselves, and can change their mind at any time about whether or not to do so.

The End of Life Options Act includes several safeguards to make it less likely that a patient would choose death when a life they deem

OBITS from page A1

written after they die and the responsibility falls to friends and family.

A simple online search for “obituary template” will yield many results. (“About 20,800,000 results,” according to Google.) These templates are generally short and include basic demographic information, like the deceased’s name, age, place of residence, death date, and cause of death. Some will expand to mention a career, volunteer work, military service, hobbies, and other information.

Many obituaries follow this straightforward structure. But, according to John Davis, owner and principal director of McCarthy Funeral Homes in Turners Falls, the trend is shifting.

“What was statistical in format has changed for the better,” Davis told the *Reporter*. Whereas obituaries used to be very clinical and short, they tend to be “more personal expressions now.” Davis said that “life narratives,” as he calls obituaries, are increasingly “more of a reflection of the individual who is being remembered.”

“There’s been a big change. It’s a very positive outcome,” Davis said.

Writing a longer and more personal obituary can come as a challenge for some. But the staff at a funeral home like McCarthy will help to write or edit the content.

“We become the instrument that creates something out of full cloth,” Davis said, adding that some people don’t have ready access to a computer or feel comfortable with their writing skills. Davis told the *Reporter* that the funeral home often sits down face to face to help craft a life narrative. “That’s part of our professional service charge.”

Conflicting Narratives

Obituaries can never tell the full story. But these short snippets of text and photographs can end up having an official air; the final word on a life. Sometimes they are all or most of what remains of someone in the written record after their death. Yet, they are not objective by any standard.

What happens when there are conflicting narratives about a person who is deceased? Some recently published obituaries can show some of the problems that can arise.

When the United Kingdom’s Prince Philip died in 2021, the Associated Press was criticized for writing in his obituary that he was known to make “occasionally racist and sexist remarks.” Under pressure, the publication changed the language to “occasionally deeply offensive remarks.”

And just this year, a small daily paper in Utah came under fire for publishing an obituary of a man that said he “excelled at everything he did” and “enjoyed making memories with the family.” What the obituary did not mention is that the man had died by his own hand after murdering seven other members of his family. *The Spectrum* eventually pulled the obituary from publication after public outcry.

According to Davis, minor disagreements can often arise between those tasked with writing an obituary. “When I have received two different drafts and they’re not on the same page, it gets a little political,” he told the *Reporter*. He said that he tries to reconcile the different versions, but that ultimately “they have to present something that is unified and coming from one source.”

Though the narrative does need to be “unified,” it doesn’t have to be wholly positive. “Newspaper publications today are willing to print [negative content], whereas in the past, that would have been edited out,”

worth living is still possible. People living with disabilities were some of the most crucial critics of the bill, Comerford said, and helped shape these provisions.

“The value of the lives of disabled people are discounted by our society in the most profound ways,” said Dina Stander, a Shutesbury resident and professional end-of-life coach who lives with a disability. Stander said she worries that people will choose medically assisted dying in situations where different economic circumstances or social supports might have made life worth living.

As one protection against coercion, the Massachusetts bill states that one of the two witnesses cannot have any financial ties to the dying person’s estate, and the other cannot be responsible for the cost

of their end-of-life care.

Sandeen said these and other stipulations in the law do a good job of protecting disabled people, and anyone else deciding how they want to die. “You can’t qualify because of disability – you have to be terminally ill,” she stressed.

If medically assisted death becomes legal in Massachusetts, doctors would not be required to prescribe the drugs when patients request them.

“If a Catholic physician thinks this is wrong, the state of Massachusetts is not going to compel them to write a prescription,” Sandeen said. “I think that’s a good thing, but the patient may be in a position of having to find another physician.”

“It is the people who don’t have a community of care around them that I worry about,” argued Stander.

Davis said. “They would have removed any content that would be considered confrontational.”

Changing Media

There used to be a stronger dividing line between “obituaries,” items written by newspaper reporters, and “death notices,” written by family and friends of the deceased. But in recent decades the line between these two forms has become blurred. Most obituaries published in American newspapers are actually submitted by family and friends and published for a fee, much like classified advertisements.

Publishing an obituary was “free for years,” Davis said, but “now they’re part of advertising revenue.” The cost of publishing an obituary can in some cases exceed \$500.

The *Greenfield Recorder*, which publishes obituaries for many Franklin County residents, charges a flat fee of \$120 to publish an obituary with up to 120 words of text and a small photo. The obituary will be available online in perpetuity and will run for one day in print (one can purchase additional days in print for \$120 a day). The cheapest price we could find for placing a “standard death notice” in the *Boston Globe* was \$213.54, plus \$50 per photo.

Some obituary writers may have a funeral home submit the obituary to the paper. But it is possible to submit an obituary directly. The *Greenfield Recorder* directs those who want to submit an obituary to *Legacy.com*, where they can fill out the obituary information using a pre-made template. The site requires the user to list a funeral home the paper can contact to verify the death.

The *Recorder* did not respond when we reached out with specific questions about how the paper handles editing and publishing obituaries.

Obituaries that are published in the *Greenfield Recorder* – and hundreds of other newspapers – remain available on *Legacy.com* after their initial run in the paper. On the site, users can share “memories” and even photos of the deceased. It’s not unlike social media pages that become memorial pages for people after they die. That’s almost certainly by design.

“With all the social media that we have, people are electing not to use print media anymore, but to use various forms of social media to remember their loved one,” Davis said, adding that he thinks this form of obituary “reaches many more households and individuals.”

It’s not just websites like Facebook and Instagram that are changing how people view obituaries. In 2019, *Ancestry.com* announced that it had digitized over 262 million obituaries from across the world using “artificial intelligence algorithms” to extract key data and text. Most of the content seems to come from the over 23,000 newspapers that Ancestry-owned *Newspapers.com* has on record; the site offers “free” digitization services for newspaper archives, though this seems to require authorizing inclusion in outside databases such as *Ancestry.com*.

An individual’s increasingly vast digital footprint – tweets, selfies, restaurant reviews, location data, shoe shopping habits – could be seen as a new form of obituary, in as much as it will shape the way they are perceived by any future researcher who has access to that data.

For those who prefer the more traditional approach to memorializing their loved ones, there is still a section of most local print newspapers (though not our own) where they can publish a notice of death, a few pleasant sentences about the deceased’s life, and a grainy black-and-white photograph.

At least for now.



PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

Fred Holmgren
Piano Tuning & Repair

Stay tuned!

(978)544-5494
fredholmgren@gmail.com

DOLAN & DOLAN
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

174 AVENUE A
TURNERS FALLS MASSACHUSETTS
01376
413-863-3133

PERSONAL INJURY, WILLS & ESTATES, WORKER'S COMP

B. RUBIN & SONS INC.

COMPLETE AUTO REPAIRS

Shocks • Tires • Batteries • Starters
Struts • Tune-ups • Brakes • Oil Change

194 MILLERS FALLS RD. • 413-863-2236

10% SENIOR DISCOUNT FREE ESTIMATES

MASS INSPECTION STATION: NO. 13051

MONTAGUE from page A1

Turners Falls High School auditorium, and that the location had already been reserved.

Ellis reported that the two houses of the state legislature had reached agreement on compromise legislation to extend until April 2025 permission for local government to hold meetings virtually, and that the bill is expected to be signed by the governor before the end of this month. One "surprise," he said, is that the legislation would allow representative town meetings like Montague's to hold hybrid meetings, combining in-person and virtual participation.

Kuklewicz said that while he saw advantages to virtual or hybrid town meetings, there would be "a lot of logistics to be worked out," and that he would prefer to hold an in-person meeting as in the recent past. Kuklewicz also noted that town meeting moderator Ray Godin had suggested polling town meeting members to see which option they preferred.

Ellis said that the town would need answers to a poll "almost immediately."

"Let's get it out in the next few days, so we can hear by Monday," said Kuklewicz.

As far as the meeting time was concerned, Kuklewicz noted that the annual meeting usually starts at 8:30 a.m.

Ellis said that there had been a suggestion for a 45-minute "cider and donuts pre-meeting," where chairs and members of key committees could respond to questions. He suggested starting the annual meeting at 9 a.m..

Kuklewicz suggested the pre-meeting could focus on the most controversial articles, but said he didn't know what they would be. "Sometimes the articles I think are the simplest engender the most discussion," he said.

Finance committee chair Franca Wisniewski and capital improvements committee member Ariel Elan both spoke in favor of the idea of a pre-meeting, although they seemed to differ as to its purpose and agenda.

Kuklewicz and Boutwell indicated that they were amenable to the experiment, and Ellis said he would contact the school district to see if the cafeteria was available at 8 a.m.

Kuklewicz then summarized each of the 32 articles on the warrant, which ranged from the operating budgets of the town as a whole, the Clean Water Facility (CWF),

and the town airport to assessments for the Gill-Montague Regional School District and the Franklin County Technical school, appropriations for 14 capital projects, and large transfers of money into five different stabilization and trust-funds accounts.

Some of the capital projects appearing on the warrant overlapped with a list of potential projects to be funded by federal American Rescue Plan Act money, which the board had reviewed and prioritized at its March 13 meeting. These included three projects at the CWF – a rough-terrain vehicle, upgrades to the septage receiving station, and a new boiler – as well as repairs to the Eleventh Street bridge over the power canal. These projects, which would be funded by CWF retained earnings and two stabilization funds, totaled \$502,000.

Town Personnel

After appointing Annie Levine to the position of Great Falls Farmers Market Manager and approving contracts with two police unions, the Police Benevolent Association (PBA) Patrol and Detectives Local 183 and PBA Sergeants Local 184, the board discussed a hiring committee for the town clerk.

Deb Bourbeau, the current clerk, plans to retire by July 1, and the board has recommended that a committee consisting of town officials and volunteers review the qualifications of her assistant, Kathern "Beanie" Pierce, to replace her. Ellis suggested a number of members for the committee. He did not call it a "hiring committee," but did suggest that its members should be formally appointed and "treated as a public meeting body."

Elan expressed concern, which she said was not "personal," at the potential appointment of Godin to the committee as the town meeting moderator had expressed his opposition to changing the clerk position from elected to appointed at a special town meeting earlier this month. The change, which the town meeting approved, will go before voters in the May 16 annual town election.

"The central question is not whether this candidate should be elected or appointed," Ellis responded. "That will be determined by voters. We are making either an interim appointment, or we're making a long-term appointment based on the outcome of the election."

"That's a useful reminder of what

the overall process is," Elan replied.

If the selectboard decides to replace Bourbeau with Pierce, the town will need to hire a new assistant clerk, as well as another employee in the clerk's office, which is being expanded this year to handle an increased workload under new state election laws. The board did not discuss a role for the committee in hiring for these positions.

Other Business

Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority requested four change orders for the streetscape project on Avenue A between Second and First streets.

The first, a \$3,110 sidewalk repair on the corner of A and Second, was approved by the board, as was a \$45,240 project to add brick paving in front of the Shady Glen restaurant between the sidewalk and Avenue A.

The third change order, \$13,800 to replace a sidewalk leading to the alley on the southwest side of the Glen, and the fourth, \$7,048 to install a pedestal and meter to transfer power to street lamps, were delayed due to a shortage of funds.

A scheduled hearing on the transfer of an all-alcohol license from the former Hubie's Tavern to the Shea Theater was postponed, at Kuklewicz's request, due to the absence of selectboard member Matt Lord.

The board also was unable to vote on an agreement with FirstLight Power to place signage on power company's property notifying the public of combined sewer overflows because the agreement had not been finalized. "Just a little legal language we want to have worked out," said Ellis, noting that the agreement was unrelated to FirstLight's federal relicensing process.

Without a formal vote, Kuklewicz and Boutwell agreed to submit a request for a \$95,000 earmark in the state budget to fund electrical and pump upgrades at the Montague Center water district.

Ellis announced that Montague would participate in the annual fuel bidding process organized by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, and that he would be speaking about the town's wastewater upgrades and challenges at a conference of the Massachusetts Rural Water Association on Wednesday.

The next selectboard meeting will be held, "in person" at the town hall, on Monday, April 3.

**COMING UP AT THE**

Fri. March 31st: Shea Presents The Slambovian Circus of Dreams

Sat. April 1st: Shea Presents "April Foods Day": Humor for Humanity event ft. comedian Jimmy Tingle - a benefit for Franklin County Community Meals Program

Fri. April 7th: The Performance Project Presents Mother Tongue

Sat. April 15th: Pioneer Valley Jazz Shares Presents: Knuckleball

Wed. April 19th: Greenfield Community College's Music Department presents their Spring Concert

Fri. April 21st: The Voo, Autonomous Battleship Collective, and the Shea Present Iain Matthews

w/s/g Pairdown and Allysen Callery

Sat. April 22nd (2-3 PM): "Karen with a K" Dance Play

Sat. April 22nd (8 PM): Shea Presents Tiffany, the Shadows Pop Art Show (yes, *that* Tiffany!)

Fri. April 28th: E1 Rentals Presents OZ/DC: tribute night to Ozzy

Osbourne and AC/DC ft. Crazy Train and Back in Black

Sat. April 29th: Shea Presents Adam Ezra Group and Whiskey Treaty Roadshow

TICKETS AND MORE INFO AT SHEATHEATER.ORG

#GETTOTHESEA

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE**One More Vacancy**

By **MIKE JACKSON**

GILL-MONTAGUE – With its budget season behind it, the regional school committee held relatively short meetings on March 14 and March 28. On the 14th, the committee approved an FY'24 general-fund budget of \$23,595,806, balanced by taking \$400,000 out of the district's excess and deficiency account. This passed by a 7-0 vote, and will go to town meetings this spring.

Students from Turners Falls and Pioneer Valley high schools took turns touring each other's schools in a cultural exchange program organized by the Six Town Regional Planning Board, which is studying the feasibility of combining all the districts' towns into one new larger district. "I thought the students from both schools collaborated exceptionally well," Beck said.

The committee heard a long presentation from Joanne Blier projecting the costs and benefits of reducing the radius within which students are not bused to school. The district uses 1.5 miles across the board, corresponding with the distance at which riders make the district eligible for state transportation reimbursement.

Members said it may make sense to use a smaller radius at the elementary level than at the middle and

high school, and Gill member Cristina Marcalow argued that providing transportation for more students would be "supporting the economy of the town in helping parents – probably mostly mothers – who take on the burden of this transportation."

No vote was taken on the matter, but general support was expressed for finding a way to transport elementary-aged students up the hill from downtown Turners Falls without costing too much to the district.

At the March 28 meeting, Montague member John Irminger reported that he had compared 10th-grade MCAS scores for public high schools in the county – Turners Falls, Greenfield, Mohawk, Mahar, Frontier, and Pioneer. Turners, he said, had the second-highest combined math and English-language score, despite having the second-highest poverty rate. "That's good news, in terms of the quality of program that's being offered at Gill-Montague," he said.

Chair Jane Oakes announced at the March 28 meeting that no Montague volunteers had stepped forward to fill a vacant seat until the May election, and furthermore that Montague member Jennifer Waryas, whose term extends until 2024, had resigned from the committee.

Nomination papers are due this week for the spring election.

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM). CALL 863-8666!

EARN MORE \$\$

CD SPECIALS!

See Bank for details or visit greenfieldsavings.com/rates

888-324-3191
greenfieldsavings.com

Greenfield Savings Bank

Member FDIC/Member DIF

Now Open 7 days 11am-9pm

EL NOPALITO
MEXICAN RESTAURANT & PIZZERIA

196 TURNERS FALLS RD. MONTAGUE, MA 01351

413-863-5419 413-863-5645

Reil Improve Air Quality & Heating/Cooling Efficiency
CLEANING SERVICES LLC

DUCT CLEANING

Free Video Inspections

Air Duct • Baseboard • Dryer Vent Cleaning

Log on to see our Rotobrush video

Ed Terault, Owner

Call 413-223-5494 or visit www.REILCLEAN.com

Professional Painting & Decorating Contractor Since 1900

1900-2022 • Our 122st Year

COUTURE BROS.

Christian S. Couture, President

• Commercial
• Residential
• Industrial

Tel: (413) 863-4346 Fax: (413) 863-3740
400 Avenue A - PO Box 270 - Turners Falls, MA 01376
www.couturebros.com | HIC Lic. 100326

A Taste of Comfort

Made RIGHT Here

Green Fields Market
144 Main Street
Greenfield, MA
(413) 773-9567

McCusker's Market
3 State Street
Shelburne Falls, MA
(413) 625-2548

1. come in
2. put feet up
3. have drink
4. eat grub

THE VOO

NEW FOOD!

78 3rd St TFMA

HOURS/SPECIALS

ORDER ONLINE:
thevoo.net

MoRe

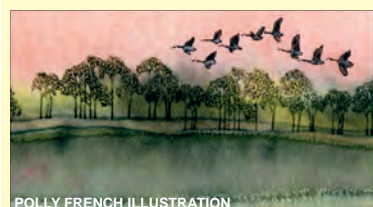
SARAH ROBERTSON PHOTO



FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORER.ORG

OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

MARCH 30, 2023



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

EPITAPHS FROM BEYOND THE TOMB

BY DAVID BRULE

MILLERS FALLS – Maybe it’s a damp March day, lonesome train calling in the distance, echoing as it winds along the edge of the Plains. Or maybe it’s a hot August afternoon, bicycle parked under the towering white pines, leaning against a tombstone or tree trunk, cushion of pine needles underfoot. Other times,

In a rush on a weekday morning, I tap the horn as I speed past this cemetery

Where my parents are buried Side by side under a smooth slab of granite.

Then all day long, I think of her rising up

To give me that look Of knowing disapproval

While my father calmly tells her to lie back down

(Adapted from “No Time” by Billy Collins.)

But this day, I’m actually taking some time to visit the long dead and gone, to hear and remember their stories. I figure if you live in a village long enough, it’ll get to seem like you know as many of the dead lying here as you do individuals who are the actual living.

I tell mother and father I’ll be right back and I wander off to other graves, some family – up to twenty by now – or acquaintances. I know too many of their stories to recount here.

Death did not come easily for most. Up here there are suicides, cancer deaths, and AIDS deaths, those who died by fire or gunshot, broken hearts, or worse. Rare were the lucky human beings who died without pain, quietly in their sleep. Others, like the village Doc, the retired restaurant chef, or the celebrated ball player, may well be counted among the grateful dead.

But let’s not kid ourselves. These kinds of life stories are never chiseled into the marble headstones. Who were they, and what marked their lives? Most had a few moments of joy, in between long periods of struggle and sadness. All you see, though, are the dates declaring the beginnings and ends of their lives here on this Earth.

Charlie and Ida: Over yonder under the soft sweep of pine boughs and history are two simple footstones of children, set deep, almost covered by more than a hundred years of moss and lichen, except when those of us who know their stories scrape away the ef-

fects of time on their mostly-forgotten names in the stone. Brother and sister were placed here, side by side, in the late 1880s.

Charlie was my own grandfather’s little brother, though neither he nor Charlie ever set eyes on each other. Charlie died before grandfather, the last and youngest of five brothers, was born. Little Charlie never had much of life’s experiences, taken away at the age of ten by diphtheria before anyone knew of its causes or cures.

Next to Charlie lies his little sister, dead from heat exhaustion after running home under the sun in burning July. No one knew how to calm the white heat within her little frame before that fire went out.

“My life’s blossom could never bloom and so I’ll never know what could have been. I was my mother’s only little girl, and now I’ve left her. Would I have given her grandchildren? Maybe another little girl? She would have liked that. If only I hadn’t done that foolish thing, racing my brothers home that July. But how was I to know?”

“And now I’m nothing but dust. A faded memory in the minds of the few family left.”

Judah: A great-grandfather, and the father of the two little children buried next to him.

He had more sons, four who survived and now lie in the different corners of this cemetery, but not too far away from one another.

Judah was the one who left us a strong legacy with mixed blood running through his veins, African, Nehantic, and White. That blood was a great problem for some and a source of pride and mystery for others.

In life he towered above most of his generation, driving his horse and wagon for the Tool company up to the train depot and back, day after day. He bought this farmstead where I now live before he literally bought the proverbial farm in 1929.

He married a white Calvinist Scots woman. She set out to erase the memory of his dark-skinned kin and origins. She buried the secret deep, trying to make sure no one would ever know.

Lizzie: Great Grandmother, over from Scotland, now lying here under the pines in a place ironically called Highland. She’s been under this carpet of earth and pine needles for almost one hundred years. Stern and strong-willed, she ruled her family of husband and rough-hewn boys with an iron hand. She set the tone, and her reputation has come see **WEST ALONG** page B10

Above: A small Wendell fish moves suddenly up the Great Chain of Being.

Stories in the Stones

By NINA ROSSI

TURNERS FALLS – I have long admired the old headstones in New England cemeteries topped with winged heads or winged skulls – so much so that a few years ago I embroidered one across the back shoulders of a men’s shirt. Doing this during the pandemic helped me to focus thoughts of illness and death into absorbing and satisfying handiwork.

The design I stitched was based on a wax rubbing I made sometime in the 1990s at the Old Deerfield cemetery. The practice of rubbing gravestones, I found out afterwards, is strongly discouraged. Wondering why, I reached out to TaMara Conde of New Salem, who has been preserving gravestones for over 20 years, for an explanation.

First off, Conde said, rubbing only really works on slate stones. “Marble and sandstone will just make a bumpy black picture and may crumble under light pressure,” she explained. “Rubbing on the slate will make the best rubbings, but the pressure can make the bedding planes separate and flake off – just the nature of the stone.”

It’s also dangerous for the rubber – Conde pointed out that every year, about a dozen people are injured or killed when monuments fall on them.

Many people enjoy browsing the headstones of cemeteries for the historical and personal content of the various carvings and sculptures, and the many different epitaphs. Some old statues and memorials are quite beautiful and awe-inspiring, and the tributes can be very touching, especially those of parents mourning their young children.

For some people, a fascination with cemeteries has led to a career researching and/or restoring gravestones. One of these is Brenda Sullivan, founder of the Gravestone Girls, a business which creates and sells



A handsomely-carved stone in Gill’s North Cemetery.

replica markers and educates the public about gravestone art and history. I reached out to her after seeing that she had given a talk at the New Salem library.

Sullivan lectures and leads tours on cemetery art, history, and symbolism, and teaches how to do gravestone rubbings using non-destructive techniques. She will give a lecture and tour about Gill cemeteries on July 29.

see **STONES** page B4

LOCAL HISTORY

What Is a Spiritualist?

By DAVID JAMES

LAKE PLEASANT – Within a decade of the founding of home-grown American Spiritualism in the late 1840s, the essence of the definition of a Spiritualist – which has stood the test of time and distance since – was laid out in November 1854 in Tea-Party-radical Boston in the Constitution of the New

England Spiritualists’ Association.

That definition states: “Our creed is simple. Spirits do communicate with man – that is the creed. The legitimate consequences of belief in that single fact, are all that can be chargeable upon Spiritualism. All else that Spiritualists may believe and do, belongs to them as individuals, and not necessarily as Spiritualists.”

In the vein of the Libertarians who emerged a quarter-century thereafter, Spiritualists early and late orbited around the Sun of Individualism – a blessing for freedom, equality, and the Siblinghood of Humanity, but also a curse. Factionalism – over gender wars between predominantly female trance mediums and primarily male lecturers, the pros and cons of Christianity vis-a-vis Modern Spiritualism, and opposite sides-of-the-coin concerning reincarnation – prevented sufficient commonality between congregants, effective centralization, or national organization for nearly the first 50 years.

To this day, some Spiritualists are in the forefront of movements for radical change, both of societal focus and the speed of goal attainment. Some Spiritualists are private practitioners in their homes, along with up to a dozen family members and friends. And many are somewhere betwixt and between the range-ends of those rainbows.

Lake Pleasant, both the smallest see **SPIRITUALIST** page B2



Residents of a Lake Pleasant cottage, circa 1900. Lake Pleasant Collection (MS 914), Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center, UMass Amherst Libraries.

SPIRITUALIST from page B2 of the Town of Montague's five villages – 124 residents in the ZIP code, per the 2020 Census – and its youngest (founded in 1874), is a microcosm and a macrocosm of Spiritualism's triumphs and tragedies.

For the first half-century of its existence, Lake Pleasant was the largest gathering place for Spiritualists in the United States. By virtue of the chain of Spiritualist organizations with roots in the village – from the Massachusetts Association of Spiritualists and Liberalists (1874), which incorporated as the New England Spiritualist Campmeeting Association (1879-1976), to The National Spiritual Alliance (TNSA), which split from NESCA in 1913 – Lake Pleasant remains the oldest continuously-existing same-site year-round Spiritualist center in the nation.

TNSA has an open and affirming mission statement, and seven guiding principles. The fulcrum fourth principle, on "Communication between materiality and non-materiality," states: "Spirit transcends dimension. All souls, flesh and spirit, communicate with each other."

"Never say *never*," so-called wise people will tell you – or *none*, or *always*, or *all* – lest one white-crow chef spoils the soup. However, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to find a white crow.

Consequently, concerning religion, the "wise people" will say instead: "Virtually all religions in all ages and in all places believe in one form or another of some sort of afterlife, of some sort of ancestor worship or fear thereof, of some sort of higher power, or powers, being, or beings, living life elsewhere and elsewhere as an immaterial spirit, or spirits, rather than material life in physical body as is done here on Earth."

If such is the case, how natural then would it be for there to be communication between inhabitants of those two worlds, or dimensions, which contain souls who exist on Earth, and following human death continue to live as souls with their self-same identities in a Spirit World?

For TNSA and its affiliates, as well as for other Spiritualist organizations and like-minded religious and spiritual individuals and groups the Earth-world over, communication from friends and family alive in the Spirit World is an integral part of worship services.

That integral part involves messages given by a medium, or mediums, to congregants. They receive these messages from loved ones, via the medium acting as a smartphone-style "conductor-connector" of the content, as evidence of transition to afterlife and thereby of the continuation, or continuity, of life.

In the Material World there are five widely-accepted senses, though some believe there are six: feeling, hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and knowing. A soul in the Spirit World who wants to communicate sends sensory information through a medium, which ideally will assist the recipient to recognize the message sender's identity. It is a three-way communication structure, spirit to medium to recipient.

Because human beings have front-facing predator eyes to assist in finding food, thus ensuring continuity of life in the Material World, the most predominant Spirit World message form, or technique, involves *clairvoyance*, the "clear seeing" of visual images: a John

Deere tractor or a '55 Chevy two-tone convertible, or personages tall, short, fat, thin, young, old, female, male, with blue eyes, blond hair....

Clairvoyance is followed by three "clairs" of virtually equal percentage. *Clairaudience* is the "clear hearing" of music, noises, sounds, a voice, or voices. *Claircognition* is the "clear knowledge" of people, places, or events the medium would not normally know about, such as forewarnings, premonitions, and prophesies, as if there were "a mind in the medium's body" which can present summary truths, skipping steps of procedure and moving from question to answer with the speed and clarity of light. And *clairsentience* is the "clear feeling" of a spirit's emotions, feelings, or character traits via a medium's "gut" reaction, or physical or mental pain, or joy, or joys.

In addition to these four major "clairs," there are two minor ones. *Clairaromacy* is the "clear smelling," or scenting, of odors from the Spirit World via the medium from the message sender of the message sender's habits or preferences in the Material World – perhaps a certain cigar, cigarette, or pipe tobacco, or a transitioned friend or relative's favorite perfume. *Clairgustatory*, finally, is the "clear tasting": of foods, fruits, nuts, coffee, milk, tea, whiskey, wine, to stimulate a memory or association to remind recipients of souls now in the Spirit World when they were here on Earth.

In addition to the "clairs," a soul in the Spirit World and a medium in the Material World can also engage in two-way communication via automatic writing, drawing, painting, and sculpting. The late Louise Shattuck, a TNSA Life Member and a noted animal artist and dog breeder, was also an automatic writer and sculptor, known in certain secret circles as the Oracle of Lake Pleasant. She was the third generation of a Spiritualist family which was among the earliest residents of the village.

Louise's maternal grandmother, Anna Dyer Bickford, was an Irish immigrant escaping from the Great Potato Famine of the 1840s and an early home medium who conducted seances for family and friends.

Her maternal grandfather Frank Bickford built the first wooden footbridge in 1888 connecting the original Lake Pleasant settlement called the Bluffs with a later settlement called the Highlands. He also constructed the 600-seat temple, library, community center, and headquarters of the New England Spiritualist Campmeeting Association, a building destroyed by an arsonist in 1955.

Louise's mother, Sarah Bickford Shattuck, was a well-known New England oil painter and craftist, as well as an automatic writing medium and ouija board user.

The Bickford-Shattuck family's personal papers, art works and old photographs, Spiritualist memorabilia, as well as the diaries, writings, and papers of Aurin F. Hill, second president of TNSA, are grouped in the Robert S. Cox Special Collections at the UMass Amherst libraries at www.tinyurl.com/LakePCollection.

Sixty photos by George Scott of Millers Falls made from restored glass-plate negatives (1890-1910), as well as early Lake Pleasant property deeds and other artifacts of that era, are grouped together at www.tinyurl.com/LakePCollection2.

DEATH AND DYING

a curated book list

COMPILED BY Montague Public Libraries director CAITLIN KELLEY and her STAFF.

For Kids



Maybe Tomorrow?

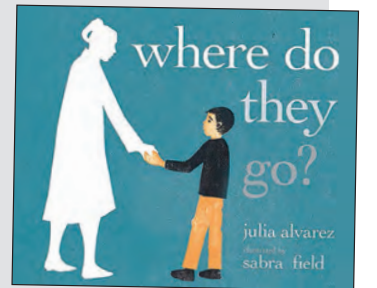
By Charlotte Agell, 2019.

A heartwarming story about loss, healing, and how to be a friend during hard times. K through Grade 2.

Where Do They Go?

By Julia Alvarez, 2016.

Bestselling novelist (*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*) and children's author (the *Tía Lola Stories*) Julia Alvarez's new picture book is a beautifully crafted poem for children that gently addresses the emotional side of death. Preschool through Grade 2.



The Care and Feeding of a Pet Black Hole

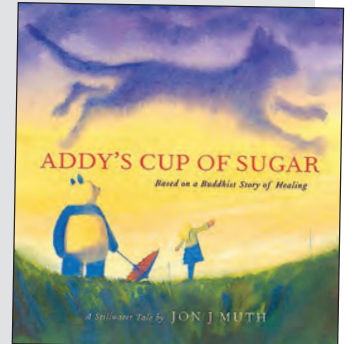
By Michelle Cuevas, 2018.

"As much a journey of grief and healing as a literal adventure, Cuevas's story is both touching and funny." (Booklist) Grades 3 through 7.

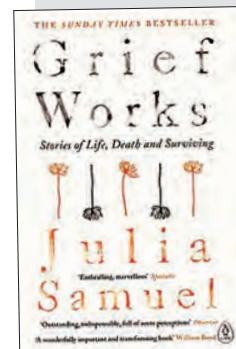
Addy's Cup of Sugar: A Stillwater Tale

By Jon Muth, 2020.

"With simple, direct storytelling, Muth reveals the immanence within everyday life, a theme underscored by the perfect watercolor illustrations... This gracefully told story will comfort readers who have experienced death with its healthy truth while the gorgeous illustrations will uplift them... a master class of picture-book storytelling." (Kirkus Reviews) Preschool through Grade 3.



For Adults



Grief Works: Stories of Life, Death and Surviving

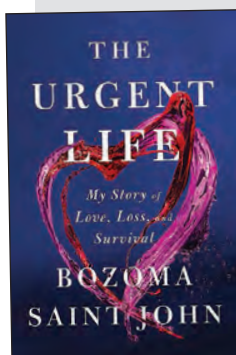
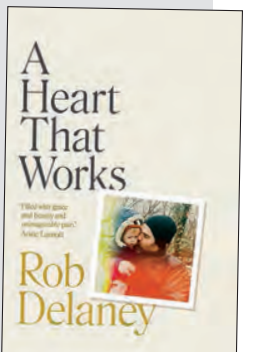
By Julia Samuel, 2018.

"As a guide for the newly grieving, *Grief Works* succeeds on many levels, and the author's compassionate storytelling skills provide even broader appeal. Though often touching on profoundly sad situations, Samuel's stories and reflections consistently hit an authentically inspiring note." (Kirkus Reviews)

A Heart That Works

By Rob Delaney, 2022.

Confronted with the terminal illness of his youngest child, comedian Rob Delaney writes with a heartbreaking mixture of honesty and self-deprecating humor.



The Urgent Life: My Story of Love, Loss, and Survival

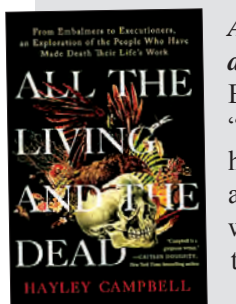
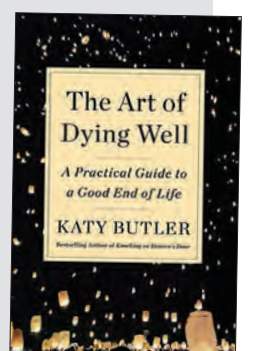
By Bozoma Saint John, 2023.

"A successful marketing executive's account of how her estranged husband's terminal cancer diagnosis brought them together again and taught her to 'live every day of my life with urgency.'" (Kirkus Reviews)

The Art of Dying Well: A Practical Guide to a Good End of Life

By Katy Butler, 2019.

This book is about living as well as possible for as long as possible and adapting successfully to change. "A roadmap to the end that combines medical, practical, and spiritual guidance." (Boston Globe)



All the Living & The Dead: From Embalmers to Executioners, an Exploration of the People Who Have Made Death Their Life's Work

By Hayley Campbell, 2022.

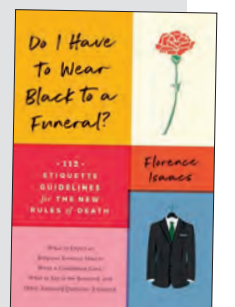
"Going beyond the gravedigger and the embalmer, [Campbell] approaches her subjects with kindness and humor, highlighting an industry that will always be in demand. Reading this book because the hidden world of death workers is fascinating is reason enough, but one may find in reading it... that attending to death deepens one's understanding of its mystery and, by extension, the mystery of life." (Los Angeles Review of Books)

Do I Have to Wear Black to a Funeral?

112 Etiquette Guidelines for the New Rules of Death

By Florence Isaacs, 2020.

Everything you ever wanted to know about funeral etiquette but were afraid to ask.



PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

Dennis L. Booska
Dennis L. Booska, Jr.
Phone & Fax
413-863-3690

Booska's Flooring

169 Avenue A, Turners Falls

Member
The Flooring Network.

**Tile
Lino
Carpet**

Harriet Paine
REALTOR®

C (413) 475-4203
O (413) 223-1367

harriet@cohnandcompany.com
cohnandcompany.com

117 Main Street
Greenfield, MA 01301

COHN & COMPANY

MASSIVE BOOKSHOP
EST. 2020

YOUR LOCAL RNTI-PRIME BOOK SERVICE

VISIT US AT: MASSIVEBOOKSHOP.COM

TRADITIONS

Root Beer Floats at the Osgood Brook Cemetery

By SARAH ROBERTSON

WENDELL – One June afternoon every year, a group of friends and neighbors meet at the Osgood Brook Cemetery to sing, dance, and share root beer floats. The annual event is a birthday party for Florence Klein, who would be turning 98 years old this June, and her daughter, Wendell resident Sally Alley Muffin Stuffin.

“We have this celebration because mom always loved a good time. She loved to sing. She loved to dance. She was a party girl and nothing stops her from a party, including death,” Sally says. “Because she wasn’t as mobile as she used to be, we had to have it at the cemetery, so that’s why we ended up there.”

Sally and her mother share the same birthday, and have always made a tradition of celebrating the event together.

“I realized I didn’t want to celebrate my birthday without mom,” Sally says. “It’s what our birthday was about, and I wasn’t going to not celebrate my birthday, so I was like, *okay*, let’s have a party.”

Joyful rituals like singing, baking, birthday parties and, of course, root beer floats kept their spirits up in the years following Florence’s stroke, when she had to sell her home in New York and move in with Sally.

“And during that time we sang all the time,” Sally says. “All the time. We got so close – closer than ever – and, of course, celebrated our birthdays.”

Their favorite song to sing was Bing

Crosby and the Andrews Sisters’ 1944 hit “Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive.” The pair lived together for a decade, until Florence’s passing in 2017, two days after their birthday.

“The next year I had a big party,” Sally explains, “because in Judaism, a year later you do a stone, and you all gather to celebrate that. I turned that into a huge party with a klezmer band and everything.”

The tradition has continued ever since. Around 40 people tend to show up for the party each year in the Osgood Brook Cemetery off New Salem Road. It is a relatively new cemetery, so right now it is mostly open space with plenty of room for music, kibitzing, and Morris dancers.

“Every year there’s more and more graves there, and there are more and more people we know and love and care about,” Sally says. “I know most of the people who are underground there. It’s strange, but that’s how it used to be. You lived in the same community as your ancestors, and you knew everybody in the cemetery. But that’s kind of unusual now.”

It is a “bring-your-own-folding-chair affair,” according to Sally.

“My dream is that it becomes such an institution in Wendell that people even forget that it started out as our birthdays,” Sally tells the *Reporter*. “Just, on this date everybody goes for root beer floats at the cemetery. And they don’t even remember why it is – it just happens, every year, long after I’m gone. That would be a great legacy to leave behind.”

Volunteering in Hospice: A Front-Row Seat



By TROUBLE MANDESON

GREENFIELD – I don’t know the exact moment it became clear to me that I was suited to being with and supporting those on their journey out of this life, but my mom’s death in my twenties set it in motion. In spite of the horrors and trauma of watching her lose her ability to stand or walk, her face bloat from steroids, and her voice get comically squeaky from the tumors pressing on her larynx, we spent hours talking and laughing, eating her favorite foods, and making lists of how to distribute her belongings.

There were plenty of days I locked myself into the downstairs bathroom and sobbed my heart out, only to wash my face, square my shoulders, and walk back upstairs to her room. Just because we were able to laugh together didn’t mean this wasn’t heartwrenching. She was leaving her beloved children and husband; we were losing our rock. Yet our intuition and empathy allowed us to see past the fact of her dying and hold on to the moments she had yet to live.

While some people rage against death or feel panic and fear at the potential for pain and suffering, others show a calm acceptance. Some people want to put their affairs in order – I once videotaped a hospice client with lung cancer exhorting her children about the dangers of smoking – and some want to deny or ignore their impending end.

A hospice client once quipped that she wished she had the date of her death, just so she’d know when it would all be over. She was so good-natured that I looked forward to our weekly visits to boost my own mood. Her outlook was honest, and she was able to express her fears about leaving her husband of 60 years behind. Her insight helped her to find closure, and I was happy to be her sounding board.

When we spend time with those in their last days, we have the space to ask the questions we’ve been putting off: “What do you want done with your remains?,” or “Who gets granny’s wedding ring?,” or “What really happened that day?”

For some, the process of dying is an opportunity to unburden. Some seek a confessor to expose long-held memories or fragments of things remembered; some simply want to express their fears and receive acknowledgement in return. As an objective visitor to the dying, I am a conduit for their revelations and a relief to their conscience. It is a special place to be.

I don’t think the people I visit have any idea that time spent with them is as much a comfort to me as it is to them. I also want to believe that at my own end I’ll be surrounded by loving, caring people.

While death and dying are terrifying words that may evoke horrible images, in my humble experience death is pretty anticlimactic.

Surprisingly, in my many years as a hospice volunteer, I’ve only attended one death. It happened over several moments of long, shuddering breaths, in and out, and then this perfect stranger was gone. I felt neutral about it – it was a naturally occurring event, like a branch falling off of a tree.

Occasionally I cross paths with a client’s family, at bedsides or memorial services, and I’ve received nothing but gratitude and acknowledgement for being there for their loved one. For caregivers and family members, we are the respite that allows them time off to attend to business or to take a break. For the dying, we are companions and, if we’re lucky, sometimes even friends.

It’s really okay to be sad or angry about dying. It’s okay to grieve while people are still alive; it’s our way of preparing for the eventuality of being without them. BJ Miller, a palliative care and hospice doctor, says “sadness is not an enemy,” and I agree with him. I think sadness can be the impetus to process our grief. We humans possess an amazing resilience that allows us to live life in spite of crippling emotions.

Being a hospice volunteer isn’t for everyone, and there really aren’t any special skills beyond having empathy for others. It does mean entering homes or care facilities and making yourself comfortable with strangers. It means preparing to find people in vulnerable, sometimes embarrassing, situations while remaining objective. It means navigating family, friends, and medical practitioners. It requires a willingness to adapt to new situations quickly, to be flexible, and to always be open to things changing.

Sometimes it’s uncomfortable approaching people who are facing their death. I’ve been ignored, yelled at, and asked to leave. One man rolled his wheelchair around and, with his back to me, slowly rolled backwards until the wheels were touching my knees. I got the message and left. You learn not to take it personally.

On the other hand, when you do connect with someone new, it can feel very special, even in the short time it lasts.

I graduated from a training course held over six Saturdays, and since then I complete annual self-administered tests and readings. I occasionally attend a training update on a special topic, such as dementia, or receive new health-care guidelines that require a signature.

Best of all, I only accept the jobs I want, and spend as little or as much time volunteering as I choose.

If you think that being a hospice volunteer is something you’d like to do or you’re interested in learning more, I urge you to contact your local hospice to inquire about training. It can be very fulfilling to open up to new experiences, to be willing to stretch yourself and grow, and to put yourself in the place where you will find yourself someday, on your own deathbed.



EXHIBITS

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Life is ___: an Exploration of Being through the Eyes of Young People.* Youth from the Brick House Teen Center artfully explore their experiences of living in modern rural America using a variety of mediums. This exhibit was created in partnership with the Smithsonian on Main Street exhibit *Crossroads: Change in Rural America.* Through April 26.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Montague at Work and Play: Illustrations from the Montague Reporter, 2019-2023,* fifty-two full-color illustrations by Nina Rossi of people at work and play in the villages of Montague. Through April 15.

Montague Center Library: *Carolyn Wampole,* paintings and collages. Through April 12.

Barnes Gallery, Leverett Crafts and Arts: *Over Under and Through the Warp: The Art of Tapestry Weaving.* Group show of textile artists, April 1 through 30. Reception this Sunday, April 2 from 1 to 4 p.m.

South Gallery, Greenfield Community College: *Ten Little N---r Girls.* Imo Nse Imeh responds to a 1907 children’s book with drawings of contemporary black girls in various states of danger, expressing modern realities of racial subjugation. Through April 7.

Goose Divine Energy, Greenfield: *Topographies and Other Surface Tensions.* Dr Adhi Two Owls explores the surfaces of natural forms. Through June 15. Reception this Friday, March 31, from 5 to 8 p.m.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Mystra Art Show!* Work by Dawn Cook, J. Burkett,

Nora Charters, Shannon Ketch, Erica Pinto, Troy Curry, Andi Magenheimer, Phineas Roy, Ariel Kotker, and more. Through April.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *No Somos Maquinas (We Are Not Machines),* words and portraits of farmworkers in Western Mass, bilingual. Through April 29.

Wendell Free Library: *Stephen Dalmass,* photography. Through April.

Shelburne Arts Coop Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *You Wear That Well,* wearable textile art by Nancy Baker, Arthur de Bow, and Sue Kranz. Through April.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *STEAM-Y Art and Science.* Art that incorporates the sciences. Through May 14.

Sunderland Library: *Art with Heart.* Local artists work with grieving children in the Center for Grieving Children and Teens, a Cooley Dickinson Hospital program. Through May 4.

Augusta Savage Gallery, UMass Amherst: *Portraits in Red: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls,* paintings by Nayana LaFond. Through May 12.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Becoming Form,* abstract paintings by Karen Iglehart. Through March.

A.P.E., Northampton: *The Big Ink.* An enormous portable press comes to the gallery on April 1 and 2. Live printing from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day of monumental woodblocks carved by local artists.

Brattleboro Museum and Art Center: *Keith Haring: Subway Drawings,* eighteen works from NYC subway stations, through April 16. Four new spring exhibits: Daniel Callahan, *EnMassQ;* Mitsuko Brooks, *Letters Mingle Souls;* Juan Hinojosa, *Paradise City;* and Cathy Cone, *Portals and Portraits.*

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

 **OrigamiUSA**

Origami is for anyone, anywhere, anytime!

Join us at: OrigamiUSA.org
Email: admin@origamiusa.org
Tel: 212.769.5635

- Find a local community origami group
- Fold from diagrams in our publications
- Shop for origami paper and books
- And much more!

HEADSTONE CLEANING

Gravesite & Flag Maintenance

Over 30 years experience in cemetery work.
Serving Franklin County. (413) 489-3079

 **FEDERAL STREET BOOKS**

8 Federal Street, Greenfield
federalstreetbooks.com

STONES from page B1

Gravestone Biz

Sullivan grew up in a hands-on household; her mother was an antiques dealer, and her father did restoration work for the business. When she was a child, Sullivan made regular visits with her grandmother to cemeteries where she saw colonial, Victorian, and modern gravestones, and was entertained by doing rubbings and reading epitaphs.

Years later she combined her art history education with an interest to create three-dimensional replica keepsakes of stones she loved, developing a nondestructive molding-and-casting technique that she could take into the cemetery.

"We do actually make contact with the stones to take images," Sullivan recalled of the genesis of her business some 30 years ago. "With help from one of my 'gravestone girls,' we started off just doing it for ourselves. The joke was, 'nothing says Happy Birthday or Merry Christmas like a gravestone!'"

People wanted to buy these creations from her, and the Gravestone Girls business grew. Now there are two other "girls" involved, with occasional help from Sullivan's husband and her father. They recently added a line of chocolate bars molded with gravestone motifs.

Sullivan wants people to be aware of the historical point of view, so every replica grave marker or chocolate bar comes with a picture of the original gravestone, the name of the person, the location of the graveyard, and information about the symbolism of the art.

Historical Viewpoint

Sullivan identified three major periods of gravestone art: the colonial era, the 19th century, and the modern period. She explained how cemeteries speak about what we, our community, and our society feel about mortality through memorialization. The location and landscape of graveyards are indicative of certain periods and beliefs as well; with many colonial-era burial grounds in the middle of a town, and later burials on the outskirts as people became more concerned with sanitation and disease in the 19th century.

"Many people have no idea why those colonial graveyards look the way they do," said Sullivan. "They

ask, 'Skulls on stones? That's gross and creepy and morbid, why would they do that?'" The colonial mindset was to create what she likes to call "scared straight" imagery: skulls with wings, skeletons, bones, and casket shapes. Sullivan said that these served as "messages from the dead to the living about mortality and morality, the idea that *I am here, I am dead...* My message to the living is to *mind your P's and Q's and do the good work, because you are going to die, too. Nobody gets out alive.*"

The brutal imagery was meant as a teaching tool that both literate and illiterate townspeople could read. The slightest transgression might make the difference between going to heaven or hell, according to the strict beliefs of the time.

"You spent your days trying to survive. No modern refrigeration, no modern medicine – if you fell off your horse, lost control of a wagon, had a pile of boards or logs fall on you – they really understood the concept of here one minute, gone the next," explained Sullivan.

"We do not know that. We don't have any idea of that. I really think it's part of the reason we panicked so badly about the pandemic. It struck us so hard because it's the first time in more than 100 years that we had a disease where we couldn't just take a pill or have a shot – we couldn't combat it, we were at the mercy of that disease. All of a sudden we were just thrust back into the same situation of the people from the 17th and 18th century."

In the 1800s, life got a little easier, and religious beliefs became less literal, less superstitious. According to Sullivan, "once we get into the late 1800s we are very different as a society overall. Folks aren't living with the specter of death as the colonials did. Everything changes, both in the land of the living and the land of the dead. We move from being colonial to independent, from an agrarian to industrialized society."

The cemetery was a very social place in the 19th century. People were picnicking, reading, playing, and visiting there. Large status symbol gravestones changed the cemetery landscape. Willow and urn motifs replaced winged skulls. Victorians talked a lot about death, but the ornamentation was decidedly sentimental.



This unusual style of gravestone found at the Old South Cemetery in Montague is called a "billboard."

And in the modern period?

"Medicine comes in and plays a huge role in the 20th century in terms of the art of gravestones and the messages on them," Sullivan told me. "When you get things like antibiotics and you understand what makes you sick, you take health-care out of the realm of magic and religion and put it in the land of science. There were huge strides in that in the 20th century. We were able to cheat death."

Modern eyes looked back on the busyness of Victorian-era decorations as old-fashioned and moved towards a simpler, more pastoral look for cemeteries and other spaces.

"Also, funerals move out of the home. We have embalming. I see a lot more personalization on stones by the end of the century," she added.

What's her personal favorite era? "Colonial – the more primitive the better. The best examples are in the Boston area," answered Sullivan, who lives in Worcester.

"What will your gravestone be like?" I asked her.

"I'm the last of my line, so I am not having one," she told me. "I hope to be composted, if it becomes legal in this state by then. I think the science of composting is really cool. It renders bone and everything."

Local Gravestones

Sullivan has not given many presentations in our area so far, and is not familiar with any notable stones here. Before her July lecture, she will visit all four Gill cemeteries and take pictures, which she will make into a virtual tour for attendees for the talk. Then the group will walk around one of the graveyards and discuss what they see. A local historian will accompany them to answer more specific questions about who is buried there.

After speaking with Sullivan, I reached out to the Association for Gravestone Studies (AGS) in Greenfield to see if they had information to share about interesting gravestones in our readership towns.

I heard back from Bob Drinkwater of Amherst, who has been doing research for the past 40 years on the men who carved gravestones in western Mass during the 18th and early 19th centuries. He is preparing a book on the stonecutters for publication, and will give a presentation in Conway on May 16.

Drinkwater has also researched the gravestones of African Americans, Native Americans, and European immigrants in western Massachusetts, and wrote a book about his findings called *In Memory of Susan Freedom* (Levellers Press, 2020).

"Until 1800, most gravestones were handmade from start to finish,"

he wrote. "It was a rural, agrarian society. During the 19th century one begins to see evidence of changes such as industrialization, urbanization, increasing disparities in wealth and social status, immigration and increasing ethnic diversity. Gradually, over the course of the nineteenth century, much of the manufacturing process was mechanized."

Drinkwater also shared some photos of notable stones, many of them in the Old South cemetery on East Taylor Hill Road in Montague Center.

Pestilence

TaMara Conde said that the "Pest" cemetery, in the woods in Wendell, gets her vote for the most interesting local graveyard.

"It is a Pestilence graveyard, meaning it was for smallpox victims," Conde told me. "There was a Pest House next to it, and you would be sent there to die if you had smallpox. You would bury the dead body you found in the house and take their place in the house until you died."

"The story goes, a traveling salesman stopped at the Sawyer house to sell his wares. He was not feeling well, and Mrs. Sawyer offered him a sit-down and a glass of water. I think there were eight people total who died from his visit. The salesman was the first."

This early-19th-century graveyard is in between Wendell and New Salem on the old Neilson Road to Morse Road, which is now closed to through traffic.

Reading Stones

John Hanson, who specializes in epitaphs and wrote a book called *Reading the Gravestones of Old New England* (2021), also responded with information about a few of his favorite gravestones in our area.

The first one is a double-headed gravestone, also in the Old South Cemetery. The inscription reads:

"In Memory of 2 Sons of ye Revd Judah & Mrs. Mary Nash who died at ye Birth the one on ye Right hand Sept 8th, 1764, on ye left Decr. 17th, 1766 *Our birth is nothing but our Death begun.*"

Hanson traces the ending line to a poem called "Night the Fifth" by Edward Young: *While man is growing life is in decrease: / And cradles rock us nearer to the tomb. / Our birth is nothing but our death begun.*

"Young's image of infancy's cradle rocking us straight to the tomb is frighteningly effective," Hanson explained. "This was an essential lesson for Calvinist readers: the death of an infant reminds us how fleeting life is."

Captain Asahel Gunn was buried in 1796 at Old South as well. His epitaph reads: "My soul my body I do trust, With him who numbers every Dust, Our Saviour faithfully will keep, His own for Death is but a Sleep."

Hanson identified this phrase as coming from a hymn by John Mason. "The decades from roughly 1740 to 1820 were a time of conflict and upheaval in New England religious life," he wrote. "People disagreed fiercely on *how* to prepare for death. For some, preparation was a life-long process of painstaking adherence to Scripture and sermons through constant effort and will. For others, preparation consisted of a more immediate, emotional, and heart-felt experience of grace."

I also asked Conde about unusual epitaphs she might have encountered locally. One is in the New Salem Center cemetery. It reads, "Here lie the remains of / Josiah Wilcox's Third Wife / Age 44 / In fifteen minutes from feeble health / God took her life and stop't her breath."

"I just want to know her name!" Conde said. "It drives me nuts that his name, is on the stone, but not hers."



Skulls or faces with wings, as seen on this stone in the Old South Cemetery in Montague, were a popular motif for early New England graves.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Epitaph studies
www.johnhansonauthor.com

The Gravestone Girls
www.gravestonegirls.com

Association for Gravestone Studies
www.gravestonestudies.org

TaMara Conde
www.historicgravestone.com

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

BKONFONQEQWIYSS.IPY
HMZGESCGOVQFHJW.MMO
FONTLVPEAXQAHO.SHC
LJKEVOBFBNAPGR.RED
SECRETBROADCAST.NET
a weekly secret message podcast

relieving chronic pain

Gretchen Wetherby, LMT
413-824-7063

bringing peace to tired muscles

gretchenwmt@gmail.com • gretchenwetherby.massagetherapy.com

413-256-6217

fine instruments bought and sold repaired and restored

Fretted Instrument Workshop
49 So. Pleasant St., Amherst, Mass. 01002

Lost and Found at the Cemetery

By JERI MORAN

MONTAGUE – Most local towns have a cemetery commission whose responsibility is to oversee municipal cemeteries in their town. In Montague, there are eight public cemeteries and seven private ones which are either run by an association or a church; by law in Massachusetts, all cemeteries must be non-profits.

The Montague cemetery commission (MCC) makes sure the grounds of the public cemeteries are maintained, the graves are in good repair – they are working on this – and storm damage is cleaned up. They also field inquiries from the public.

In an active cemetery which has room for more burials, the commission sells plots and organizes burial times in conjunction with the family and possibly a funeral home. The only public cemetery available for burial is Highland Cemetery, which is also adding the ability for green burials starting this year (see *Judith Lorei's* guest editorial on green burial on Page A5). The other public cemeteries are full, and no plots are being sold in them.

As a former cemetery commissioner and current volunteer, I've had the opportunity to help people who lived in other places locate their family gravestones in Montague, and have found some "puzzles." In one case, I encountered a gravestone found buried in someone's backyard that actually belonged in another town.

I recently spoke with a woman in Greenfield who has a photo taken in the 1950s of her grandmother's grave, and her and her mom standing nearby. It was taken when she was a child, so she doesn't remember exactly where the gravestone was, but she was told it was in Montague. She checked with the town clerk, and her grandmother's death certificate stated she was buried in one of the private cemeteries.

But... the cemetery has no record of it. They digitized their records in recent years, and the paper copies are gone, and the gravestone doesn't seem to be there. An interesting website, *FindAGrave.com*, which began in 1998 and is usually pretty accurate, does not show her being buried at the private cemetery, even though her death certificate lists her being buried there.

So sometime between the 1950s and 1998, it would seem that her gravestone disappeared. Even though it is not a public cemetery issue, the search goes on, because the commission sees its role as helping people find information in any of Montague's cemeteries, if it can.

Then this past fall the cemetery



The author writes: "Another grave in Old South Cemetery is famous among gravestone scholars because it tells a detailed story of the death of the person – 'flung from his horse and drawn by ye stirrup 26 rods along ye path...' The stone carver is also well known for the interesting way he carved this headstone, including running letters up the side of the gravestone face when he ran out of room at the end of a line!"

commission got a call from a woman who had retired to a home in Turners Falls and decided to build a fence around her property for her dog. In the process of digging, the workmen found a small, intact gravestone of a two-year-old girl who died in 1912, according to the inscription.

The woman contacted the commission to see which of our cemeteries it belonged in, and the answer was... none. But again, by using research tools like *FindAGrave*, it was found that the little girl was buried in a town nearby, and so arrangements are being made to get her gravestone restored to where it belongs.

How do these gravestones "migrate" to other places? Sadly, the answer often is that someone not from the family takes them illegally. They may have fallen over or were broken, and looked "interesting." Repairing broken gravestones and restoring them in a cemetery can be an expensive task, so sometimes there is a delay in getting the job done, and in the meantime, they disappear. But even though the person may have died a century ago or more, they still have family and their resting places are still visited, and it's a shame when they are gone.

There are other anomalies in our cemeteries, such as one gravestone in Chestnut Hill Cemetery which has two people's inscriptions carved on opposite sides of the headstone, even though the people seem to have nothing to do with each other. One is a man who died in 1988, and the other a six-year-old girl who died in the early 19th century – it looks to be a very old stone. There are no obvious family members buried nearby for either of them that anyone can determine.

Even *FindAGrave.com*, which often has interesting stories about particular graves and can include the person's obituary, photos, etc., had no light to shed on this mystery. Perhaps it is an instance of "recycling."

So, while cemeteries may seem to be only old vestiges of traditional burial practices to many people, they remain places for families to find their ancestors and loved ones, and for historians, amateur or professional, they often tell interesting tales. And the MCC members and volunteers will continue our mandate to keep them in good shape, and to help families when they need it.

Jeri Moran volunteers with the Montague Cemetery Commission.

LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on March 28, 2013: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

One-Year Deal at Strathmore?

Montague's attempt to give the Strathmore Mill complex away this year fell short of its target, but the process is still moving forward. At their Monday night meeting, the selectboard declined one group's proposal for use of a single building, and heard a second group's request for a one-year exclusive period in which to study the entire property.

If such an agreement is reached, Flight Patterns LLC, which sees in the buildings a future "mixed-use eco-center," would invest in updating environmental, structural, and market assessments on the property – a deal supported by town officials that reviewed the two proposals. If they walk away, their findings can

be used by subsequent developers.

The theme of physical deterioration and maintenance costs was raised repeatedly, with recent reports of new leaks in the roof adding to the sense of urgency.

Flight Patterns member BJ Warshaw spoke of soundproof musician studios, artist studios overlooking the river, cafes, and indoor and outdoor spaces for public gathering and events. The project would highlight resource efficiency, with solar panels, passive heating and cooling, use of the onsite hydroelectric turbine owned by Swift River Hydro, "living roofs," graywater systems and rainwater collection, and accessibility via the bicycle path and pedestrian bridge.

Flight Patterns plans to work with Tocci Building Companies of Woburn on the project, as well as as-yet-unnamed "developers from Brooklyn."

20 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on March 27, 2003: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

G-M Schools Seek \$14 Million

The tension in the air did not abate until the school committee left the room. Superintendent Brenda Finn, business administrator Lynn Bassett, and school committee members laid out details of the schools' FY'04 budget while the selectboard questioned them. Finn delivered the news that after cutting 22 teacher and staff positions, the Gill-Montague schools could cut no further. She said the district was still reeling from a 15% increase in health insurance costs last year, and anticipates a further 20% increase – totalling \$200,000 – this year.

"We have a differential in what the schools want and what the town can afford somewhere in the neigh-

borhood of \$400,000 to \$420,000," selectboard member Sam Lovejoy told Finn. "How does your committee propose to deal with that?"

Westover Peace Demo

About 2,000 peace advocates marched to the gates of Westover Air Force Base on Saturday, where 53 people were arrested for committing civil disobedience by blocking the road, as more than a million people continued daily demonstrations around the United States and the globe.

Protestors marched about a mile to the base singing traditional peace songs like "Down By the Riverside" and chanting current slogans including "money for jobs, not for war" and "this is what democracy looks like," past several homes where smaller groups gathered waving flags and pro-war posters.

150 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on April 2, 1873: News from the Turners Falls Reporter's archive.

Local Matters

STRUCK WATER at the Artesian Well! Sixty gallons per minute! 605 feet deep!

The latest style of invitation to imbibe, is – "Take a gargle."

The rain storm of Saturday has caused old Connecticut's mouth to water.

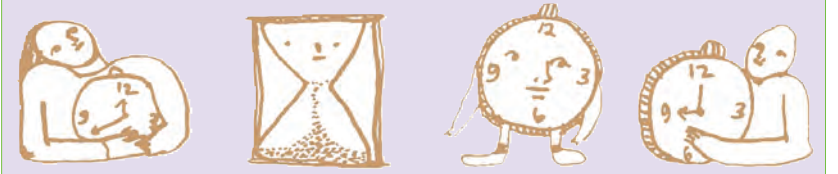
Harry Moynihan was unlucky enough to get a hoist down the elevator at the Montague Mill on Monday. Bruised cheek, and confinement to the house for a few days.

Yesterday was All Fool's Day, and we have no doubt that its votaries celebrated the occasion with a religious fervor that would most likely spring from the fact that it is the only day in the year sanctified

for the benefit of simpletons.

Our fire department exhibits signs of life at last, and a meeting is to be held very soon when all the causes of delay will be discussed. Mr. Edward J. Braddock has been appointed clerk, vice J.S. McVey. Upon inquiry, we find that no blame can be attached to the officers appointed. The whole thing has been in such shape as to thwart them at every move, and it is now proposed to commence where the illegality began and do the work right. We will have a fire department yet, if we only wait. "Haste makes waste," and we have nothing to waste.

Some person has been kind enough to send two or three bouquets to us during the past week. Most heartily do we appreciate the thoughtfulness that prompts such a heaven-born creature to strew flowers in the thorny path of an editor's life.



Montague Community Television News

Various Video Offerings

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – We're talking toxicities with Julian and Mag, we're rocking with the Young Dubliners, we're "Living with Nature," we're chatting with local authors, and – of course – we're catching up with the Montague selectboard, the Gill selectboard, the GMRSD school committee, and the Montague finance committee.

All MCTV videos are available on our Vimeo page, and all community members are welcome to submit

videos to be aired on Channel 17 and featured on the Vimeo page. Think of what you would like to make and come see how we can help! MCTV is always available to assist in local video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for checkout, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

Or is there something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment. Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or infomontaguetelevision@gmail.com.

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

Peter Waters Painting Services
Interior/Exterior
Custom Residential
Fully Insured
Office: 978-544-6534
Cell: 413-461-5172
Wendell, MA
peterwaters88@gmail.com

Start the Future Today!

- Wealth Management
- Trust Services
- Estate Settlement

GSB Wealth Management & Trust Services
(413) 775-8335 • greenfieldsavings.com

Abby Graseck Zen Shiatsu
Turners Falls & Gill
413-834-5382
agraseck.shiatsu@gmail.com
www.abbygraseckshiatsu.net

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Reverse Hit-And-Run; Fox; Soon To Be Ex-Wife; Reclaimed Bike; Cook Fires And Target Practice

Monday, 3/20

7:44 a.m. Assisted motorist with motor vehicle lockout at Carroll's Market.

1:30 p.m. Walk-in advising that she hit a pickup truck while backing out of a parking space at the Turners Falls Post Office. She noticed the damage when she arrived at Food City. She went back to talk to the truck owner, but the truck had left. Very minor damage.

1:58 p.m. Caller would like it on record that she was notified by her employer that her name was used in a fraudulent unemployment claim.

5:43 p.m. 911 open line, Montague City Road. No voices heard. Male party had fallen out of a wheelchair. Officer able to assist back into chair.

Tuesday, 3/21

1:13 p.m. Employee at Turners Falls Pizza House reporting that a female came in and stole their tip jar.

2:21 p.m. Property owner at River Child LLC on Canal Road reporting a trespassing incident that went on for several days. There was damage done to his property by the trespassers, who admitted to the damage. Summons delivered.

5:59 p.m. Caller states that when she is walking at night, there is a rabid fox by the church on Montague Avenue that she believes may bite her. Wants animal to be removed from the area. Referred to animal control.

9:25 p.m. Assisted Bay-state Franklin Medical Center with courtesy transport for a female whose husband is staying in the hospital. Hospital called back in stating they went to let the woman know MPD could assist, and she had already left.

9:44 p.m. Bridge Street caller states carbon monoxide detector was going off. Call given to Shelburne Control.

11:53 p.m. Federal Street caller requests an officer check the area, as she keeps hearing knocking on her door. Caller states the last time she heard a noise was at 10:50 p.m. Sergeant checked area; nobody in vicinity.

Wednesday, 3/22

12:20 a.m. Assisted Hadley PD. [Redacted.]

12:49 a.m. State police requests area check at East Taylor Hill Road location for a female party, who is looking for information on her family and how to contact them. SP states female sounds upset, claims her mom and herself "don't have much longer in the world." Sergeant advised female is not at involved location, and is

not believed to be staying there currently.

7:11 a.m. Caller would like her husband to leave their residence due to constant fighting. Confirmed verbal argument. Male had left on foot prior to PD arrival. Caller advised of court options. Unable to locate male.

9:31 a.m. 911 caller at Wentworth congregate housing would like to meet with an officer about an incident a day or two ago. Caller reports ongoing neighbor disputes, and disturbances by a specific neighbor. Several days ago caller observed something at 6 a.m. that didn't look right. Caller is often uncomfortable with the living situation at said address, and feels management isn't doing enough to keep resident safe. Advised of options.

12:47 p.m. Smoke coming from Elks Lodge building on L Street. Porch fire. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

12:57 p.m. Walk-in picked up soliciting permit for solar company.

3:13 p.m. 911 misdial on Fairway Avenue. Caller states he was walking and his walker fell into a crack in the sidewalk and his phone dialed 911. Wife requesting no one come to their house.

4:31 p.m. Eleventh Street caller states someone is living in their car on the parking lot of his rental property. Vehicle gone on arrival.

4:58 p.m. Old Greenfield Road caller states his security camera was activated at 2:35 p.m. when a male party was seen walking on his land. He is unsure who it is, but has screenshots of footage. Detective spoke with caller; he has a tenant staying there as he is currently out of town. Advised caller to have tenant call if anything else suspicious happens in the future.

5:29 p.m. Turners Falls Road caller states her neighbors are shooting guns in their yard. Detective checked area. Heard two gunshots, both quiet and in the distance; did not hear any more gunshots.

6:52 p.m. Caller requesting emergency road detail at Avenue A and Fifth Street as there is a disabled vehicle in the intersection trying to be fixed that is blocking traffic. Estimated time 45 minutes. Services rendered.

Thursday 3/23

7:57 a.m. Burglar alarm, Greenfield Cooperative Bank. Canceled by alarm company; no police service necessary.

10:03 a.m. Oakman Street caller reports his soon to be ex-wife accessed his

Microsoft account, deleted files, and changed some information. Report taken. 3:30 p.m. Eleventh Street caller states unwanted car is back in his parking lot. Detective made contact with male party; will move along.

4:12 p.m. Fourth Street caller states that when she returned from work, her door was ajar, and she does not remember leaving it open. Reports she went to pick her child up from the high school and noticed a bicycle that looked like hers there. She went home and checked, her bicycle wasn't there, so she went back to the high school and took it. Wants this on record.

4:34 p.m. Sherman Drive caller states a male party has been burning trash in his yard all day, and it's causing her trouble breathing. He also has five or six unregistered vehicles in his yard, and she has complained about them before and nothing was done. Reports FD was at location earlier and was told it was a cooking fire, but knows it's trash. FD advises party was using clean, dry wood, and smoke and size of flames were within regulation. Advised male party of complaint. Fire contained and blowing in opposite direction from caller for last hour.

5:15 p.m. East Main Street caller states there is someone at the picnic table in his backyard who seems to be under the influence of something. Sergeant not seeing party; unfounded or gone on arrival.

10:45 p.m. 911 misdial, LightLife Foods. Male party called by accident.

Friday, 3/24

1:43 a.m. Caller wants to speak with officer about an incident last night in Greenfield; states he has been trying to call GPD all day and has not been able to speak with anyone. Caller was advised that as the incident occurred in Greenfield, he needs to speak with GPD. Caller called back on 911 line asking if this was Greenfield; given the number for GPD again. Called on 911 line multiple more times. Transferred to Greenfield once, given number for state police another.

1:59 p.m. Report of two loose dogs, a pitbull mix and a smaller white dog, at Federal Street and Green Pond Road.

5:06 p.m. Caller states she is on a bus to Northampton, and was told by her boyfriend that there is a car full of adults outside their apartment screaming that they need to talk with her stepdaughter. Contact made with female

party trying to pick up belongings from residence. Advised of complaint and moved along.

9:02 p.m. Caller states there is a lot of noise coming from Kustom Auto Body on Randall Road; sounds like they are cutting cars in half. Referred to an officer.

11:04 p.m. Hartford, Connecticut 911 caller states her carbon monoxide detector is sounding. Transferred to Connecticut police. Unknown why call was mapping from Dell Street, all three times.

Saturday, 3/25

12:24 p.m. Walk-in from Park Street reports ongoing uncomfortable interactions with a neighbor.

5:52 p.m. Caller on Unity Street states male just stole her purse, with all her money in it, and took off. Male is wearing a green shirt with jeans and no shoes. Caller got her purse back. Officer providing courtesy transport to Greenfield; both parties stated nothing physical.

7 p.m. Disabled vehicle in the travel lane, Turners Falls Road. Requesting Rau's for tow.

Sunday, 3/26

2:22 a.m. Nadeau Avenue caller reports his son is currently at home while he and his wife are out of town, and has called him to tell them that people were at the location hitting the doors and windows and attempting to gain entry. At least one individual on scene known to son. Caller advised the people and vehicle, a blue SUV with two males in it, had left the scene. Officers checked on a vehicle at Unity Park belonging to an involved party, spoke with caller's son about what occurred.

3:01 p.m. Caller on Turnpike Road locked his keys in his Kia Sorento. Services rendered.

5:19 p.m. Caller on Federal Street states there is someone shooting, like they do every Sunday afternoon. Received another call with same complaint. Officer advises it is being done legally.



Preparing for Your Digital Death

By RYNE HAGER

TURNERS FALLS – A lot of time and effort goes into estate planning. We accrue many things over our lives, and some of them are either valuable enough or interwoven with others' lives to the degree that it's worth worrying about what happens to them when we're gone. We worry about money, homes, cars, collections, and investments, but there are some intangibles you might need to spend a little time considering, like all those digital accounts you've dragged through life.

One great example is your Google account. Odds are that if you have an email account, it's a Gmail account, and it might also be connected to your phone, where it's associated with saved documents, photos, videos, purchases, and all sorts of other things.

What happens to that account when you are gone? If you haven't prepared for it, those you leave behind can submit a request to Google to try to get access to that account. It can be a lengthy process, and little prevents Google from denying them access for a variety of reasons. But the company does offer a sort of – no pun intended – dead-man's switch called the "Inactive Account Manager" which can fully automate this process.

The system lets you set a trigger based on a period of account inactivity. If you don't sign in for a user-configured amount of time, a link to access to your account will be granted to up to 10 other people. You can also provide other contact details, like alternate email accounts and your phone number, which Google will try to reach you at long before the duration has passed.

But if something unexpected does happen, access to your Google account, shared drives, Google Photos, Gmail, and other account details will be passed on easily, though not necessarily quickly. Still, with all the other burdens imposed at that time, the convenience of a relatively automated process that doesn't require court orders could be appreciated.

Apple has a similar system, called a "Legacy Contact," which lets you pass access to your Apple

ID – including photo backups, messages, files, and notes – to someone after you're gone. You can do this through a printed key or by selecting a digital contact. It's not quite as simple as Google's system, however, and gaining access ultimately requires submitting a death certificate together with a manual review process. But without Legacy Contact already set up, your estate or beneficiaries would further have to secure "rightful inheritor" status through a court order to gain access.

Facebook's legacy contact system operates similarly. While it won't let someone actually log into your account, see prior direct messages, or adjust your "friends" list, they will be able to write a pinned post, update images, download a copy of your data, and request that the account be removed.

If you're savvy about your digital security, you may be using a password manager. Some of these also offer systems that can be used to grant access after your death, either through printing out a sort of master key that can be stored somewhere safely, or through a system similar to Google's where an emergency contact is granted access after a given period of time.

You might be tempted to simply store your passwords in a notebook somewhere in the hope that loved ones can access those accounts through a simpler means, but I would strongly urge you to consider a safer way of storing your passwords. Anyone who gets access to those details through theft or accident will be able to access those accounts even if you haven't passed on.

Lastly, if you use two-factor authentication, consider getting a separate hardware key and storing it safely somewhere – like a safety deposit box or a safe – in case it's needed by your beneficiaries.

It may feel a little morbid to think of, but just a little bit of planning now can save your loved ones a lot of time and frustration later.

For more questions about consumer technology, how gadgets work, or which doodad to buy if you need X, Y, and Z, shoot Ryne an email at deviceadvice@montaguereporter.org.

Have a question for the editor?

Email it to us at

podcast@montaguereporter.org

and listen for our "Ask the Editor" segment to hear the answer!

The Montague Reporter Podcast



PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

DIEMAND FARM WENDELL, MA

WE CATER
your special events

GRADUATIONS
BIRTHDAYS
MEETINGS
WEDDINGS
ANNIVERSARIES
FUNERALS

THEDIEMANDFARM.COM (978) 544-3806

ROOT YOGA STUDIO
51 11TH ST., TURNERS FALLS

413.676.9076
ROOT-YOGA-STUDIO.COM

NEW STUDENT SPECIAL
THREE CLASSES FOR \$30

SHANAHAN CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY Co. INC.
SCSC "Rock solid service with level advice"

Complete Masonry Supply
Offering a complete line of pavers, wall stone, retaining wall block and more. **IDEAL**

298 Avenue A., Turners Falls 413-863-4322
and at our new location 529 S. Main St, Brattleboro or 802-579-1800
www.shanahansupply.com

Two Views: In Prose and Poetry

(from a draft of the Auto-Obituary of David James)

David James writes: "I was specifically invited to write a story presenting the views concerning human life and death and afterlife of The National Spiritual Alliance, of which I have been a member for almost a quarter-century." (See article, Page B1.) "And I did and I do fervently believe those views because of what I consider to be an experiential fact of life, my life, anyway.

"But sometimes as the deep of a darkness at high noon of a glorious day in July descends upon me, I am besieged by an alternative certainty of view of human life and death and the possibility and probability of afterlife, a view which is a view of uncertainty, for a belief, in reality, is only an opinion, not a fact, unless perhaps it becomes so, in reality, by accident."

Visitation of a Delegation From the Spirit World

In a nursing home in the fall of 2001, alone at first – except for her – I shared my mother's final night on Earth.

I sensed presences around us several times during her last hours and when I did, I would lean close across the bed and softly say: "They are waiting for you. They are all here waiting for you." Then I would name each of those present: her mother and her father, Cecilia and Henry, her ancient Aunt Mariah, whose hair had never been cut, her brother, Merlin, who died in his 20s of polio, her husband and my father, who preceded her in departure from this life in 1989.

As I said each name, the head and shoulders of each of those souls appeared in an oval frame suspended – wireless – in mid-air, which like a ship's porthole in a sea storm marked the meeting place of two separate dimensions of one unified world. I saw their faces in sharp detail, faces I had not seen for many, many years, some for more than half a century.

Other than the violent move-

ment of her diaphragm, the muscles of her neck, the size of the roundness of her always open mouth, she had been motionless, eyes closed except for a slit at the bottom of her left eye where the upper lid did not quite meet the lower one.

Near the end, grasping eased on her straw of human life. Time elongated between each breath. The strength of each inhalation became less strong.

I had spent the night holding her left hand, but not long before dawn, I felt her hand pull away from mine. Her right arm raised, turned slowly over, palm up. The hand hung above her briefly, then fluttered down to rest upon the abdomen from which I came. She was gone from this life, gone on to the next one.

I marveled then, at the scales which had blinded the eye of my mind, as I came to fully realize – in head and heart – that the soul is eternal and the conscious mind forever, death but transition of energetic form.

Beyond Death's Doorstep

If you please, you may call me Telmah, Prince of Hobos and Huns. Or, if it please you not, you may softly call me ... "Hey you."

Am I to be my Death-Defier?
Am I to be my Death-Embracer?
I love living, know nothing other than it, but when Route 666 ceases and desists within a fist-full of time-and-space-chunks, or less, and I have been overshotten from a rusty cannon on Anytown Common, or never again will respond to the sound of my name, or to yours – even should you be best foe or friend – for me then, it will be time to wave vigorous goodbye, for good, like Winston Churchill, or for ill, as Richard Nixon, tip my crown – should I be wearing one – to a crowd, or to no one, and pass through a blue bead-curtain crack in a grey granite block to find a path wending to a Lovely Lady? Or a Lovely Saber Tiger? or to an endless night of dark, dank, cold? or to a sunsetless day of lush, light, heat? or to a sea beach of alternate grains of sand, slate-grey and green? or to a blinking blip in a silver-studded star-speckled skyscape? or to one of vast other arrays of possibilities for denouement of whatever may follow the End of Personal Time? ... Or follow not?



By EE MILLER

GREENFIELD – Death educators encourage all adult mortals to plan in advance for their healthcare and eventual death. We encourage people to think about best- and worst-case scenarios for the somewhat predictable and inevitable, as well as the sudden and catastrophic. We emphasize the benefits of considering and discussing *before* there is a crisis – the onset of dementia, a terminal diagnosis, an accident – and we suggest that you reflect periodically, and with every major life and health event.

While many death workers offer advance-planning guidance as part of our scope of practice, you do not need to hire a lawyer or doula to complete a healthcare directive. A large and growing body of free tools is available for creating documents and having meaningful conversations. New ones sprout up every day, including checklists for "getting your shit together," not to mention new industries for greener ways to handle our bodies after we die.

We live in a culture that fetishizes choice and self-determination, and marketing machines generate endless privatized solutions – for those of us who can afford them. The expansion of options is great, and exploring them may deepen our connection to the life cycle. It can also distract us from accepting the limitations of individual agency over aging in our bodies and living in this world.

Many of us fixate on resuscitation orders and green burial, for example, but resist exploring the landscape of care for living with dementia, which one in three of us will live to experience, thanks to wondrous advances in public health and treatments for heart disease and cancer. Some of us who live in the luxury and naivety of able bodies, youth, adequate medical care, and secure housing cannot imagine valuing lives of limitation and compromise. Those of us living in less-valued, vulnerable bodies, for whom getting adequate care is not a given, might not prioritize avoiding resuscitation or hospital visits.

Our wishes and fears about death reflect not just our individual preferences, but also our relationship to social and cultural forces at large – and our vastly different

experiences in life.

The basic tasks of planning are designating someone to represent your preferences for medical care, in the event that you are alive and unable to speak for yourself, and providing them with guidance. If you do not do this, the task will fall on your next of kin; in Massachusetts, this means your spouse, your adult child, your parents, and then your sibling. This centering of family, as defined by law and biology, is appropriate for some – and disastrous for others. Completing legal documents that name someone willing and able to represent our wishes is key, and providing them with flexible, values-driven guidance is a loving, life-affirming gesture.

The best kind of guidance considers some likely scenarios, but recognizes all that we can neither predict nor control. Can any of us be certain what we might choose in the face of an illness, a disability, or a near-death experience? Remembering this can be helpful when someone we love is dying.

The dying process is a dangerous place to bring a fixation on perfection and control. Death plans are expressions of what we value most in our lives, and sometimes reveal fragments of trauma and loss from earlier experiences. If we are not careful, we may feed the fantasy of control and independence that sets more of us up to fail and increases the potential grief and trauma our loved ones will carry.

While birth plans were introduced in a landscape of overly medicalized and disempowered pregnancy, one of the unintended consequences I have witnessed is emotional distress when complications arise and attachment to a rigid vision of birth leads to a sense of failure.

In both cases, the plan is not the project, but with death it is especially hard to see any result as success. This is why, while encouraging this work, I try to find ways to dismantle and worry rigid notions, however individualized, of "good" or "bad" deaths. The much less marketable reality is: *We are trying to plan for experiences that almost always include mystery, mess, and lack of control.*

It is easy to project our fears and despair onto our loved one's laboring body, especially if we haven't witnessed death before. It is easy

to second-guess decisions, and the actions or inactions of medical providers. These experiences sometimes fuel rage – misdirected at ourselves, or at others – but they might also motivate us to address systemic failures of care.

I recommend including in the guidance what I call "advance forgiveness," which goes something like this: *Thank you for showing up for me. I trust that you will do the best you can.*

The dying process involves more than the body. It is a gift to have opportunities, amidst our sorrow, to honor our people by following their wishes. This is not always possible. We cannot always be in the room, bring them home, soothe their emotional distress, or afford the greenest disposition. In my experience, heart-wrenching situations and mistakes cannot always be avoided or fixed. But there are also always opportunities to honor lives, stay connected, and express our love and gratitude.

Resistance to and fear of death are completely reasonable, and making time and space to dream of a sweeter scenario is a lovely way to begin to engage with death. The attachment we may feel to our visions of a good death is a key to the precious life we could remember to savor right now. But it would be sad to succeed in freeing ourselves from the clutches of "losing the battle," only to find ourselves in the equally unrealistic enterprise of pursuing a narrowly-defined "beautiful" death. I do not think this is progress.

My version of progress involves making structural changes to our medical system. It involves expanding accessible infrastructures of care, and it involves giving ourselves more room to grieve, more time to connect with our beloved dead.

We can replace unreasonable expectations of endless, able-bodied, independent lives with visions of care that value the labor of caregivers and embrace our interdependence. As our tender hearts remain deeply attached to life, and to the people we love, we can find unexpected gifts as we are simply doing the best we can.

In the meantime, building the capacity to show up for each other often means doing some thoughtful, flexible planning, having conversations, making adjustments, and savoring the lives we love.

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

Turners Falls Pizza House
Family Owned & Operated
Serving Turners Falls area for 40 Years
Dave Argy, Family & Staff
PIZZA, GRINDERS,
DINNERS, SALADS, BURGERS
www.turnersfallspizza.com
119 Avenue A, Turners Falls (413) 863-8000

MYSTERY TRAIN AMHERST
BUY / SELL / TRADE
MUSIC / MOVIES / BOOKS
WE BUY RECORDS
178A N Pleasant
413-253-4776

Local Solar PV Installers
for over 16 years
in western Massachusetts
GREENFIELD SOLAR
"When day comes, we step out of the shade aflame and unafraid. The new dawn blooms as we free it. For there is always light. If only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it."
Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*
SolarGreenfield.com
2 Fiske Ave., Greenfield
(413) 772.3122
Call for free site assessment!

Buckingham Rabbits Vintage
NEW HOURS!
TH/FR 12pm-5pm
SAT 11am-6pm
SUN 12-4pm
vintage & secondhand clothing for all!
find us online
102 Avenue A TFMA 01376

Gerri Johnson Realty
Gill, MA • 413-863-9736
GerriJohnson@GJAR.com
Gerri Johnson & Associates
REALTY
WWW.GJAR.COM
GERI JOHNSON, 45 Years of Experience



“WALLACE”

Wallace, a beloved little friend and member of the MR extended family, passed away last week due to complications from being quite old in human years (pushing 90?) and being very small. The passage of time is hard on everyone, but rats get very few years on the Earth given how smart, affectionate, and funny they are.

Wallace was born in July 2020 and ferried to Turners Falls in a shoebox a few months later. She immediately lit up our lives with her buoyant nature and little sneezes. Her favorite activities included getting all the way inside

the couch, ripping up the couch, screeching when we tried to get her out of the couch, indignantly pushing bedding out of her nest, licking faces, eating salt, fat, and sugar, and sleeping in a little ball.

Wallace’s body will be at rest, holding a French fry, alongside her sibling in a garden on the Patch, but her spirit is hopefully somewhere extraordinary. If you are interested in making rat friends of your own, consider adopting a pair – or three! – from Mainely Rat Rescue, a small-animal rescue organization serving New England: www.mainelyratrescue.org.

Senior Center Activities APRIL 3 THROUGH 7

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held on Zoom on Wednesdays. Foot care clinic is held monthly. For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 2, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. Senior Health Rides are available. Contact Jonathan von Ranson (978) 544-3758.

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. From March to April there are no-cost appointments available with AARP Volunteer Tax Aid tax preparers. For more information please call 863-9357.

Monday 4/3

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Kitchen Club

Tuesday 4/4

9:30 a.m. Tuesday Knitters
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 4/5

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise

12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 4/6

10:30 a.m. Brown Bag
1 p.m. Cards & Games

Friday 4/7

AARP Tax Prep (by appointment)
2 p.m. By The Seat of Your Pants

ERVING

Open 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Open for cards, coffee, and snacks daily. Fitness room open daily. Ask the Nurse and Blood Pressure Clinic is the first Tuesday of each month. Brown Bag lunch is the first Thursday of each month. Veterans’ Services are the first Wednesday of each month. For more information, please call (413) 423-3649.

Monday 4/3

9 a.m. Interval
10:15 a.m. Stretch & Infusion

Tuesday 4/4

9 a.m. Good For U
10 a.m. Line Dancing

Wednesday 4/5

9 a.m. Cardio Low Impact
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics

Thursday 4/6

9 a.m. Core & Balance
10 a.m. Barre Fusion

Friday 4/7

9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

APRIL LIBRARY LISTING

Montague Public Libraries

Turners Falls: Carnegie (413) 863-3214
Montague Center (413) 367-2852
Millers Falls (413) 659-3801

Erving Public Library (413) 423-3348

Gill: Slate Library (413) 863-2591

Leverett Public Library (413) 548-9220

Northfield: Dickinson Library (413) 498-2455

Wendell Free Library (978) 544-3559

MONTAGUE

Multiple days: *Art Exhibit.* Paintings by Caroline Wampole, through April 12. Montague Center.

Multiple days: *Grab & Go Bags.* Science: Eggshell planters. Craft: Paper flower. While supplies last. All three branches.

1st Saturday: *Used Book Sale.* Fiction, paperbacks, kids’ books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks. Hundreds of recent donations. Carnegie, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Every Wednesday: *Story Time.* Join for stories and songs. Montague Center branch, 10 a.m.

Every Thursday: *Playgroup.* Guided and free play for preschoolers; older siblings welcome. Montague Center, 10 a.m.

2nd Monday: *Friends of MPL Meeting.* All welcome. Email vgatvalley@gmail.com for more info. Carnegie, 5:30 p.m.

2nd Thursday: *Hot Chocolate Social.* Millers Falls, 3 to 4 p.m.

Wednesday, April 19: *Author Series.* Rebecca Daniels, *Finding Sisters.* Refreshments provided. Montague Center, 6 p.m.

Saturday, April 22: *Call of the Wild.* Outdoor skills workshop for youth ages 8+. Registration required, (413) 863-3214. Montague Center, 10 a.m.

Friday, April 28: *Arbor Day Scavenger Hunt.* Carnegie, drop-in 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

ERVING

First Sunday: *Family Movie.* Community Room, 1 p.m.

Every Wednesday: *After-School Activities.* Ages 2 to 10 in the Children’s Room, ages 11 to 19 in the Teen Room. 1:30 to 3 p.m.

First Thursday: *Friends of the Library Meeting.* All welcome. 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 13: *Ancestry Library Edition.* Hands-on workshop with Sara Campbell. 5:30 p.m.

Third Sunday: *Craft Day.* Make a seasonal craft. Materials provided, RSVP required. 1 p.m.

Third Thursday: *Board of Library Trustees.* Monthly meeting open to the public. 4:30 p.m.

Fourth Monday: *Teen Movie Monday.* Join the youth services librarian for snacks and a movie. 3:30 p.m.

Last Thursday: *Book Challenge Coffee Hour.* See massbook.org/readingchallenge for more info. 5:30 p.m.

LEVERETT

All Month: *Art Exhibit.* Paintings by Jane Gruber, *Words of Inspiration.*

All Month: *Story Walks.* New story on the trail behind the library every Thursday. Thanks to the Community Network for Children.

Every Saturday: *Tai Chi.* Free classes, all welcome. Space limited, masks required. Call Dennis at (413) 367-9760 for info. Intermediate to advanced 10 a.m., beginners 11 a.m.

Every Monday and Wednesday: *Online Qigong.* Free, all welcome. See leverettlibrary.org or email Community-Qigong@gmail.com for info. 10:30 a.m.

Every Wednesday: *Playgroup.* For children ages 0 to 5 and their caregivers. Email budine@erving.org to RSVP. 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday, April 5: *Final Board & Table Games.* Drop-in gaming for ages 7 to 107. Last program for a while. 1 to 3 p.m.

Every Thursday: *Play Mah-jongg.* Beginners welcome. 1:45 to 4 p.m.

Thursday, April 6: *Bulb Gardening.* On Zoom; register on library website. 2 p.m.

Thursday, April 13: *Families in Nature.* Program runs on some select Thursdays; email budine@erving.com for more info and to RSVP (required). 10 a.m.

NORTHFIELD

1st Saturday: *Puzzle Swap.* Dozens of new-to-you puzzles for kids and adults. For more info email friendsofdml01360@gmail.com. 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Every Tuesday: *Drop-in Knitting.* Join fellow knitters and crocheters to chat and share projects. 6 to 8 p.m.

Every Wednesday: *Stories and Playtime* with Deb Wood, for ages 0 to 5. 10 a.m.

1st Wednesday: *Readers’ Choice.* April 5: Elizabeth Strout, *My Name Is Lucy Barton.* Pick up a copy at the library. 10 a.m.

Every Wednesday: *Open Tech Hours.* Pop in for help on anything library-related. Bring your device. 1 to 3 p.m.

First Thursday: *Spice Club pickup starts.* Stop in for a sample and suggested recipes while supplies last. Look for a new spice every month.

Saturday, April 8: *iPhone Photography Workshop* with artist/teacher John Clarke. Registration required at

Weather, etc. sometimes causes changes in library events; you may want to call ahead to confirm events.

dmemlib@gmail.com. 1 p.m.

2nd Wednesday: *Readings Group.* April 12: Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* Pick up a copy at the library. 3 p.m.

2nd Thursday: *Environmental Awareness Group.* April 13: Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life.* Pick up a copy at the library. 6:30 p.m.

Friday, April 14: *Your Energy Bill.* Claire Chang from Greenfield Solar talks about how your bill relates to the energy grid. 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 20: *Library Trivia Night.* At Four Star Farms Brewery, 6 p.m.

Thursday, April 27: *Abijah Prince of Northfield: from Enslaved to Entrepreneur.* Northfield Trinitarian Church, 6 p.m.

Friday, April 28: *Talk on Beaver Pond Wildlife,* with tracker-naturalist David Brown. 5:30 p.m.

WENDELL

Every Saturday: *StoryCraft.* Picture book read-aloud and connected craft. 10:30 a.m.

Every Saturday: *AA Group.* 7 p.m.

Saturday, April 1: *Pickleball How-To.* Email wendell@cw-mars.org to register. 2 to 5 p.m.

Every Sunday: *Yoga.* All levels, by sliding-scale donation. 10 a.m.

Sunday, April 2: *Ukrainian Egg Dying Workshop.* Email wendell@cw-mars.org to register. 2 to 5 p.m.

Every Tuesday: *Art Group.* 5 to 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 4: *Rep. Aaron Saunders office hours.* 2 p.m.

Every Wednesday: *Playgroup.* 10 a.m.

Every Friday: *LEGO club.* Drop-in program for ages 5 and up with adult. 4 p.m.

2nd and 4th Saturdays: *Wendell Youth Group.* 1 p.m.


Sunday, April 9: *Poetry, Stories, and Spoken Word.* Open mic, 5-minute slots. 2 p.m.

Tuesday, April 11: *William Erving in Wendell.* Program by Sara Campbell. 7 p.m.

2nd and 4th Thursdays: *Fiber Arts / Mending Circle.* 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 25: *Earth Day Presentation* by Amy Donovan. 6:30 p.m.

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!



BOOK MILL
440 Greenfield Rd.
Montague, MA 01351

413-367-9206 www.montaguebookmill.com
Books you don't need in a place you can't find.

Brian R. San Soucie
Locksmith - CRL
certified - bonded - insured


863-2471
28 Montague St
Turners Falls, MA

Trusted for over 25 years, installing all types of
locks & entry devices for business & homes



- Dead Bolts
- Household Lock Sets
- Master Keys & Re-keys
- Safe Combinations Changed

French King
Restaurant & Motel



BREAKFAST AND LUNCH
FRIDAY – 8 A.M. TO 2 P.M.
SATURDAY & SUNDAY – 7 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

DINNER
FRIDAY & SATURDAY – 4:30 TO 9:30 P.M.

CALL TO CONFIRM: (413) 423-3328



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



The Reporter is looking for volunteers to help us curate this listing. Interested? Contact us at editor@montaguereporter.org

THURSDAY, MARCH 30

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Brookside Project*. Free. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 31

Turners Falls High School: *Hairspray! The Musical*. \$ 7 p.m.

Mount Toby Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Singalong Concert* feat. *Annie Patterson, Peter Blood*. Benefit for Trans Asylum Seekers Support Network. \$ 7 p.m.

Bookends, Florence: *Mary Fraser, Julia Friend*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Slambovian Circus of Dreams*. \$ 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Rat Bath, DiTrani Brothers, The Bubs, Beetsblog*. \$ 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed: *Jonathan Scales Fourchestra*. \$ 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Topsy & Co., Sapling, Mal Devisa, Jesse Taylor Band*. \$ 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Moxie, Cloudbelly, Lux Deluxe*. \$ 8 p.m.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belcher-town: *Arkm Foam, Angela Sawyer, Noise Nomads, Sound of Pot, Lamb Hock, Shea Mowat*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bluegrass and Beyond*. Free. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 1

Turners Falls High School: *Hairspray! The Musical*. \$ 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Ask Wanda*. Free. 7 p.m.

Hutghi's at the Nook, Westfield: *Gloons, Warm, Scorpion Porch, Brujo*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Jimmy Tingle*. \$ 8 p.m.

Shutesbury Athletic Club: *Wildcat O'Halloran*. Free. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Root Fiyah* feat. *Abdul Baki*. Free. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, APRIL 2

Turners Falls High School: *Hairspray! The Musical*. \$ 2 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Frank Hurricane, Omeed Goodarzi, Beets Blog*. \$ 6 p.m.

The Perch at Hawks & Reed: *Abbie Parrow, Solipsis, Misadventure, Daniel Blair*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Yasmin Williams*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Deerhoof, Sound of Ceres, Zannie*. \$ 8 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Sunburned Hand of the Man,*

Powers/Rolin Duo. \$ 8 p.m.

MONDAY, APRIL 3

Bookends, Florence: *Weston Olencki & Tongue Depressor, Variant State, Sweetness the Point of Song*. \$ 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, APRIL 4

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Dear Nora*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Guster, Karina Rykman*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5

Tree House Brewing, South Deerfield: *The Tallest Man on Earth*. \$ 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Colby Nathan, Thérèse, Thee Holy Oaks, Lamb Hock*. \$ 8 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Dear Nora, Footings*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 7

Nova Arts, Keene, NH: *Cave In, Thalia Zedek*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: The Performance Project presents *Mother Tongue*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Myriam Gendron*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Sorry Mister, Plunge Pool*. Free. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 8

Bombyx Center, Florence:

Combo Chimbata, Billy Martin. \$ 7 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Cave In, Barishi, Misery Whip*. \$ 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 13

Mullins Center, Amherst: *Polo G*. \$ 8:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 14

Palladium, Worcester: *Carcass, Municipal Waste, Sacred Reich, Creeping Death*. \$ 6 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Club D'Elf*. \$ 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Twen, Carinae, Prune*. \$ 8:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 15

Element Brewing, Millers Falls: *A Day Without Love, Lesbiana*. Free. 4 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Pioneer Valley Jazz Shares presents *Knuckleball*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Pocket Vinyl, Cheap City, Linnea's Garden, Hedgewitch, Chris Goudreau*. \$ 8:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, APRIL 16

John Doe, Jr.: *Hollow Deck, Playbackers, Dave Scanlon*. Free. 3 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Non Phixion, Subtex*. \$ 8 p.m.

looking forward...

FRIDAY, APRIL 21

UU Society, Amherst: *Hopkinson Smith*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Iain Matthews, Pairedown, Allysén Callery*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 29

Daily Op, Easthampton: *Large Professor*. \$ 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, APRIL 30

Brick House, Turners Falls: *PG Six, Stella Kola, Tall Travls*. \$ 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, MAY 9

Nova Arts, Keene, NH: *Vieux Farka Toure, Wet Tuna*. \$ 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 13

Palladium, Worcester: *Sepultura, Kreator, Death Angel, Spirit World*. \$ 6 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 28

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Bridget St. John, David Nagler, Stella Kola*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

MONDAY, JUNE 5

Tree House Brewing, South Deerfield: *Deer Tick*. \$ 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 17

Pines Theater, Northampton: *Gin Blossoms, Toad the Wet Sprocket, Juliana Hatfield, Kay Hanley*, more. \$ 1 p.m.



JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION

JAN ATAMIAN ILLUSTRATION



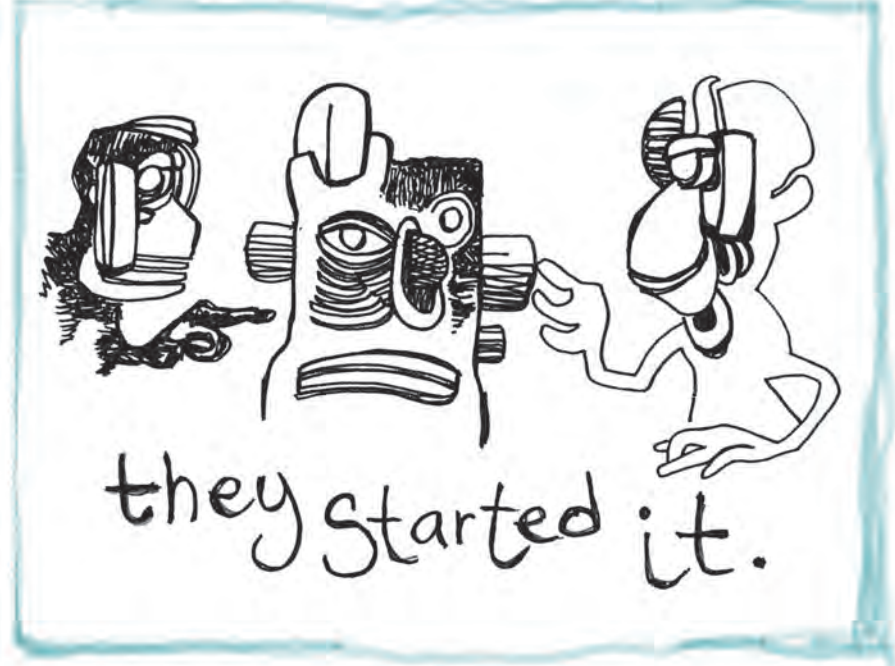
Jan Atamian

OVER THE HILL

Carolyn Clark



JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION



Submit your comics (and puzzles) to editor@montaguereporter.org. Original & local creations only, please!

MONTAGUE CRYPTOJAM !!!

HQ FAM GAY'B OLEAZL
BRL AELIY FAM'PP OL
CLICHES LULNF GIF.
- PLAYING EARLY

CRACK THE CODE? SEND YOUR ANSWER TO: INFO@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

SPIRITS, BREWS & FINE WINES

53C S. Main St. South Deerfield, MA
295 Amherst Rd. Sunderland, MA

New Location Now Open:
6 Main Road, in Gill
(formerly Jan's Package Store)
Come check us out!

Deerfield: (413) 665-2456
Sunderland: (413) 665-5030
Gill: (413) 863-5730



SALES • SERVICE • INSTALLATION
RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL
DOORS & OPENERS

Devine Overhead Doors

Gerry Devine

106 West Street
Hadley, MA. 01035

Hampshire: 586-3161
Franklin: 773-9497

Come on over
to the **Co-op.**



GREENFIELD
Cooperative Bank

NORTHAMPTON
Cooperative Bank

BestLocalBank.com | 877-682-0334

WEST ALONG from page B1

down to us now generations later. “I came here from Aberdeen to this wild place. How I wound up here I can hardly understand, or even believe it. I had to leave my brothers and sisters when I was still a young lass, and though it was damp and gray back home, I never stopped missing it. I was never to return, never to gaze upon my family again.

“None of you know what that’s like – to live in a foreign land, to leave your home and family and

start all over from scratch. I can’t say whether I ever did feel at home here, even after fifty years of trying to understand this country.

“It broke my heart to lose young Charlie. He got the black diphtheria in November of 1893. He took sick and died real fast. We had to bury him right away at night to stop the disease from spreading. He was the first child buried up here in this new cemetery.

“Then my little Ida passed away in the summer of 1895. I stopped

the clock and kept the house dark for a month. We kept vigil at home, not wanting her to be alone at night. Then it was time to put her up here on the hill with Charlie where they both are now, side by side.”

Adrian: Not far from where the great-grandparents lie is the tombstone of a kindred spirit. He’s been here since 1999. He was the bard of this town, the one of his generation who kept track of the past, preserving old photographs and oral histories.

When I met first Adrian he was knocking on my door, unexpected, jaunty beret perched on his head. He greeted me in Arabic, and I was stunned. He had been stationed with American troops during WWII for a while in North Africa before they headed out for Sicily. In Oujda, in the western reaches of Morocco, he learned the language.

He knew I had been a teacher in the Middle Atlas Mountains a generation after his WWII stint as a translator with the Army. He wanted to find out who I was, so he came down to the house on the Flat and knocked. He told me some firsthand stories about Judah and village life in the early 1900s.

I went to see him in the nursing home just before he died. I spoke a few words to him in our mutual languages, trying his memory of French and Arabic. He silently acknowledged that he heard, but he was already partly passed over to the other side. We had no real final conversation.

Patrick: He lies alone in his grave. None of his three wives or the mothers of his children are beside him. A handsome man with a roguish and irresistible smile, he broke hearts wherever he was stationed in the military. His children, at least those who knew him, adored him and still do. He lived by his own rules, hunting, fishing, and poaching, he took what he wanted, living free with his guns.

A crack shot, it is told that Patrick could pick off rats in the chickens’ pen, shooting from the upstairs back bedroom window.

On his last day, however, in the woods of New Hampshire hunting bears, he heard a branch crack and break just before the bullet slammed into him and ended his run here on this Earth.

I’m told the game wardens gave a sigh of relief, and still miss the wily rogue.

Joseph: He worked hard all of his life. He moved to this village from the city, found a job in the next village over, never leaving it except for the war years. Once the war was over he came right back to his old job, married his sweetheart

from the village, and never looked for anything or anyone else.

He built his house and home, keeping his wife and children warm and safe. He turned over his weekly pay to Eleanor, and she managed the household’s fate and fortunes carefully. He loved his family and friends, was a hard worker and good provider, and never had a bad day in his life, until the very end.

“The thing is, I made it through three years of war in the Pacific and never got a scratch. And I wound up my days in the hospital with the cancer that eventually killed me. I should have lived until I was a hundred, like many others in my family before me. Other than that, I’ve ended up with a thousand memories, and not a single regret.”

These fictional voices from beyond the grave remind us that death – and life, for that matter – are not simple.

This meditation on Death can remind us that none of us will get out of here alive. Of course, the way we leave this life is sometimes not for us to choose, but the way we live this life is up to us. We have the choice to determine how we use the time we have.

*When death comes
like a hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all
the bright coins from his purse
to buy me and snaps
his purse shut...*

*when death comes
like an iceberg between the
shoulder blades...*

*I want to step through the door
full of curiosity, wondering
What is it going to be like, that
cottage of darkness?*

*When it’s over I don’t want to
wonder
If I have made of my life something
particular, and real...*

*I don’t want to end up simply
having visited this world.*

(Adapted from
“When Death Comes”
by Mary Oliver.)



Use Coupon Code **GET15** to take \$15.00 off your order if you sign up by April 15.

Join Our CSA

20 Weeks of Fresh Organic Vegetables

June to October | Full and Half Shares Available

New this Year • New this Year • New this Year

Pick Your Own Box or Pre-Packed Pick Up Available

Sign up at **Fallsfarmllc.com**

Watch for our new expanded Farm Store in 2023!

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM). CALL 863-8666!

New Bakery Open!
411 MAIN ROAD, GILL
OPEN 7 DAYS, 8 AM - 7 PM
413-863-4431
WWW.UPINNGIL.COM

UPINNGIL

Food You Need from the Land You Love

MUSIC & MOVIES

BOOKMILL | MONTAGUE CENTER | 367.0309

Our discounts are in full bloom!

Competitive rates and discounts for all of your insurance needs!
159 Avenue A | Turners Falls | 413.863.4373 | ahrist.com

PART-TIME WORK FULL-TIME BENEFITS! | **Work Two 12-hour shifts** | **\$1K-3K SIGN-ON BONUS**

Scan the code or visit www.careers.altiumpkg.com.

Formerly Hillside Plastics
Across from the airport

Take Control of Your Future!

Avoid costly commutes and work close to home with up to \$3,000 sign-up bonus opportunities.

It's Not Just a Job...

- Medical • Dental • Vision • 401K • FSA/HSA • Vacation
- Short/Long-Term Disability • Life Insurance and more.

Join Our Team!

262 Millers Falls Rd. • Turners Falls, MA 01376

